



**MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR GEORGE R. ARIYOSHI
TO MARY KAWENA PUKUI**

November 17, 1983

I am pleased to extend my aloha, and that of the people of Hawaii, to Mary Kawena Pukui on this night of tribute to her.

If anyone symbolizes the spirit and the soul of Hawaii, it is Mary Kawena Pukui.

She is a person who adapted to two cultures, and found no conflict in them. As the daughter of a Hawaiian mother, who was descended from a line of kahuna, and a mainland father, she learned the old ways of Hawaii, including the language and the chants and the customs. But at the same time, she also heard her father read to her, in English, from the Bible and from novels.

It was this dual ability in Hawaiian and English that later enabled her to express complex Hawaiian concepts in English, and which preserved for all time a bit of history and culture that would have been lost forever had it not been for her. She translated stories she had heard in Hawaiian from her grandmother and from her mother, and these provided the basis for Kawena's 50-year collection of proverbs and sayings. Later came significant literary works, such as translations from 19th-century Hawaiian-language newspapers, as well as histories of Hawaii.

She spent the summer of 1935 touring the Big Island, talking to elderly Hawaiians to preserve in words their lives, and their histories.

For all her accomplishments, including teaching hula, instructing at Punahou School, and working so effectively for many years at the Bishop Museum, perhaps her monumental effort was the compilation of The Hawaiian Dictionary in 1957. She did this in collaboration with Samuel Elbert, who had been one of her adult students in the Hawaiian language.

Today, The Hawaiian Dictionary remains the definitive work on the usage and meaning of Hawaiian words and remains a symbol to the preservation of a language and an understanding that could have been so easily lost without the dedication of a few persons.

Hawaii and those who love Hawaii owe a great debt to Mary Kawena Pukui, a person who has devoted her life to knowledge, and understanding, and compassion.

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