

SUN OF 'IOLANI

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen first glimpsed Western culture as a student at 'Iolani School. His vision led him to become the father of modern China and a leader revered around the world today.

By Cathy Lee Chong

“We can’t turn back time, but we can preserve it from being lost.”

— Samsung magazine ad in Shanghai

Overlooking Sullivan Courtyard, a group of students gathers on a lanai. Nearby plumeria trees cast morning shadows on pathways. With open school bags before them and open minds towards the future, students laugh and talk freely.

On the opposite side of the courtyard, someone else overlooks the grassy lawn. It is a bronze statue of Dr. **Sun Yat-Sen**, who sits regally with one hand flat and one in a fist. The natural oxidation process has turned the bronze into a blend of subdued green and brown radiance. Sun Yat-Sen gazes over red ti leaf plants, laua'e ferns and into the distance. What does he see?

Sun Yat-Sen sees a modern 'Iolani School vastly different than the one he attended more than 100 years ago. Then he was called Tai Cheong or Tai Chu. With long hair pulled back in a traditional queue, he was enrolled in 1879 without knowing any English. He learned quickly, exposed to English constitutional law and European history in a small, wooden frame school house at one of 'Iolani's earlier locations.



After enrolling in 1879, Sun Yat-Sen graduated from 'Iolani in 1882. He is revered around the world as the father of modern China.

In the year 2007, he also views a co-educational student body that comes from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. 'Iolani students are now generations and cultures apart from the ones he studied alongside. In the late 1800s, 'Iolani catered to Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian boys who were instructed mainly by a British faculty brought to Hawaii by the Anglican Church.

“That was his first exposure to a Christian school that stressed fundamental liberal arts,” historian **Al Castle** said in the documentary *Finding Sandakwood Mountain: The Migration of Chinese to Hawaii*. He added that Sun Yat-Sen became a “very good writer” and wrote for the 'Iolani school newspaper.

Sun Yat-Sen's first glimpse of Western culture led towards a movement that would eventually change the most populated nation in the world. This early 'Iolani graduate began to see the possibilities for a better China.



The 'Iolani School campus from 1872 to 1902 was located at Bates Street and Nuuanu Street. Sun Yat-Sen studied at this campus which has since been demolished. Courtesy 'Iolani archives.

SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY

“After studying Sun Yat Sen, I discovered that he was both a regular guy and a genuine super star,” said **Kevin Otsuka** '07, who will be attending Stanford University this fall. “He was just one man, but he was able to bring so many people together for one goal.”

“Sun Yat-Sen had amazing passion,” said **Karlyn Kurokawa** '07 of his lifelong pursuit to revolutionize China.

“Everything he did was for the greater good, not just for himself,” added **Evan Kam** '07

To ask someone in China if he has heard of Sun Yat-Sen is like asking someone in Hawai'i if he has heard of King Kamehameha, or someone in the United States if she has heard of George Washington.

Sun Yat-Sen is revered and famed as the father of modern China.

The Sun Yat-Sen statue on 'Iolani's campus was donated to the school on November 12, 1965, by the Kuomintang



At the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Museum in Hong Kong, students working on the documentary “Finding Sun Yat-Sen” gather beneath a statue that portrays him at age 17. He holds two books, one Western and one Chinese, to represent his allegiance to both cultures.

Society of Honolulu in commemoration of his centennial. It is a replica of one sculpted by Paul Maximilien Landowski in Paris in 1928.

Sun Yat-Sen (1866–1925) was born to an ordinary farmer's family in Cuiheng Village, Xiangshan County, Guangdong Province. In 1879, then 13 years of age, he journeyed to Hawaii to join his older brother, **Sun Mei**, a successful rice farmer and merchant.

He entered 'Iolani at age 14. His teacher **Solomon Meheula** asked him to be a class observer for ten days since he could speak and write only in Chinese. But when he graduated in 1882, he was awarded a prize for grammar from King **David Kalakaua**. After

'Iolani, he attended Oahu College (now Punahou School) for one semester. His brother then sent him back to China, fearful that Sun Yat-Sen was becoming overly westernized.

“As a giant and great patriot in China, a pioneer of the Chinese democratic revolution in the 20th century, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen made immortal achievements. He overthrew the monarchy and founded the republic in China,” according to a book from the Museum of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Cuiheng.

Sun Yat-Sen led the 1911 revolution and in 1912 was named the first provisional president of the Republic of China.

Documented in many of the hallowed museums dedicated to Sun Yat-Sen in other parts of the world is the mind boggling fact that long ago he was a pupil at 'Iolani School in tiny Hawaii.

“We all learned that Dr. Sun was the creator of modern China and that he went to Hawaii as a boy because his brother was there,” says **Helen Chow**, a China Travel Service tour guide in Hong Kong. “All Chinese students know Honolulu because that's where he started.”

In 2005, the **Huang Huahua**, (second from the left) governor of Guangdong Province, China, visited 'Iolani and paid his respects to the school's statue of Sun Yat-Sen.



SHARING SUN YAT-SEN'S STORY

Documentary:
“Finding Sun Yat-Sen”
Airing May 2007
PBS Hawaii
A collaboration between 'Iolani School and Wai'anae High School

Empower young people with tools to express themselves, and let them tell an important story. The result will be an educational experience worthy of the community's attention and the creation of learning opportunities for others.

Thus, 'Iolani and Wai'anae high schools joined their talents. “Finding Sun Yat-Sen” will be broadcast on PBS Hawaii, and appear in the Shanghai International Film Festival and the Hawaii International Film Festival.

“'Iolani is one of the top schools in the state and we're really proud to be working with them,” said **John Allen**, director of the documentary and advisor for Wai'anae Seariders Production.

Likewise, Wai'anae has the top student video production team in Hawai'i, and 'Iolani's students were honored to work with the talented and creative Wai'anae students.

The project's executive producer **Melanie Kosaka** wanted to do a documentary about Sun Yat-Sen with a fresh, more edgy tone. PBS Hawai'i had received a grant from the state Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism for a collaborative media project on China.

“In China, there have been a lot of historical documentaries on Sun Yat-Sen's life,” Kosaka said, “but we wanted a student's perspective on the experiences he had in high school and in Hawai'i. We thought, ‘Why don't we tell a good story from a personal view?’”

Kosaka approached 'Iolani in early 2006 with the hope that students skilled in research and writing would be inspired to learn more about a charismatic leader who was about their age when he first saw the world beyond China. She then got Wai'anae and their Emmy-award winning Seariders involved.

'Iolani students worked on the documentary as an independent study project under the guidance of 'Iolani Director of Studies Dr. **Deborah Hall**. They visited Bishop Museum, met with several sources, read history books and articles, watched videos and talked to descendants of those who knew Sun Yat-Sen.

They interviewed **Steven Ai** '72, president of the Sun Yat-Sen Hawaii Foundation and a member of the 'Iolani Board of Governors. Steven Ai is the grandson of **Chung Kun Ai** (1865–1961), who was an 'Iolani classmate of Sun Yat-Sen's and a dedicated supporter during the early years of the revolutionary movement.

“This is my Hawai'i. Here I was brought up and educated; and it was here that I came to know what modern, civilized governments are like and what they mean.”

— Sun Yat-Sen in 1910

'Iolani students also talked with **Leigh Wai Doo**, a founding member of the Sun Yat-Sen Hawaii Foundation and president of the Palolo Chinese Home, whose grandfather was 'Iolani School graduate **Young Sen Yat** (1891–1923). Young Sen Yat was Hawai'i's first land and seaplane pilot and went to China in 1918. Sun Yat-Sen called him the Father of China's air force.

Tributes to Sun Yat-Sen were written in English and Chinese. This sign was posted at the University of Hong Kong.





At the Hong Kong Museum of History, the group from 'Iolani, Wai'anae and PBS Hawaii pose with the giant bust of Sun Yat-Sen.

Young Sen Yat raised money for the air force to support Sun Yat-Sen's revolution and died in a battle fighting for its cause.

"You wonder where China would be today, if Sun Yat-Sen hadn't come to Hawaii and experienced the different values here, such as democracy and Christianity, and found his supporters," Kosaka remarked.

After months of research, the 'Iolani and Wai'anae students embarked on a 12-day trip in January 2007, visiting places where Sun Yat-Sen lived to gain a deeper understanding of who he was.

The students on the trip included Kevin Otsuka '07, Karlyn Kurokawa '07, Sarah Fang '09, Alex Chantavy '07, Evan Kam '07, Jonalyn Arao (Wai'anae '07), James Kapu-Kaaihue (Wai'anae '06), Marshall Mole (Wai'anae '07), and Alapaki Silva (Wai'anae '07). 'Iolani's Dr. Deborah Hall, Mandarin teacher Maria Au Hoy, and Director of Institutional Advancement Jane Heimerdinger accompanied the students. Also on the trip were the documentary's director John Allen, producer David Lato, and still photographer Catherine Beaver, all professionals on the Searider's team. Terrence Quinsaat, who represented PBS Hawaii, also made the journey.

The group first stopped in Hong Kong and visited the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Museum, which opened in December 2006 in the newly restored 90-year-old Kom Tong Hall. Sun Yat-Sen graduated from medical school at what is now the University of Hong Kong.

Dr. Osmand Chan, the museum's chief curator, led the students through the museum's three stories. They saw a reconstructed scene of Sun Yat-Sen with the "Four Desperados" (Yang Heling, Chen Shaobai, Yau Lit and Guan Jingliang). They read Sun Yat-Sen's answer sheets for an anatomy examination in 1888. They saw one of his actual suits behind a glass case. Chan visited 'Iolani two years ago while doing research.

"Do you think Sun Yat-Sen expanded Christianity," Kevin Otsuka '07 asked of Chan.

"Yes," answered Chan and then shared

stories about how events in Sun Yat-Sen's life revealed his ties to Hawaii.

Sun Yat-Sen introduced his medical school roommate, Guan Jingliang, to his friend, Lee Kam Amoe, who was a woman laborer from Hawaii, and the couple got married in To Tsai Chapel in Hong Kong. Chan noted that Sun Yat-Sen was baptized in Hong Kong.

"His relationship to Christianity dates back to his time in Hawaii," Chan explained.

At the Hong Kong Museum of History, students gathered around a giant bust of Sun Yat-Sen in the center of the front lobby, posing for a photograph the way fans flock to rock stars.

The 'Iolani and Wai'anae group also traveled to Sun Yat-Sen's birthplace in Cuiheng Village in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province, China. They saw his childhood home with the original furnishings purchased in Hawaii and sent back to China.

Dr. Osmand Chan describes a scene with mannequins depicting Sun Yat-Sen and the Four Desperados.



Photos: Cathy Lee Chong



At Sun Yat-Sen's childhood home in Cuiheng Village, Zhongshan, Guangdong Province. Left to right, Evan Kam '07, Alex Chantavy '07, Kevin Otsuka '07, Sarah Fang '09 and Karlyn Kurokawa '07

Near his restored home that incorporates western and Chinese architecture is the two-story Museum of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Cuiheng.

The first floor focuses on his education, work, and revolution. A large photograph of 'Iolani's old Willis Hall from the Nuuanu campus is on display with the description: "In the autumn of 1879, Sun Yat-Sen enrolled in the 'Iolani School in Honolulu. He began to receive Western education."

The second floor of the museum highlights his family and friends. Students learned that Sun Yat-Sen had three wives over different times in his life.

His first wife was Lu Muzhen, who was also from Cuiheng. They married in 1884 and had a son, Sun Fo (a graduate of St. Louis School in Honolulu), and two daughters, Sun Yan and Sun Wan. Sun Yat-Sen's second wife, Chen Cuifen, was through common law marriage. They were partners in the early stages of his revolution.

But his most famous wife was Soong Ching Ling. She married Sun Yat-Sen in 1915 and, after his death in 1925, continued the cause to better China until her death in 1981.



The 'Iolani students visited the Salesian School in Hong Kong and asked a panel of English speaking boys their impressions of Sun Yat-Sen.



Students visited the Museum of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in Cuiheng Village.



Following a graduation at the University of Hong Kong, a group of girls embrace a statue of Sun Yat-Sen that is situated in a garden with a pond and tall trees. Behind them, a billboard promotes a Sun Yat-Sen exhibit.

The 'Iolani students learned that Sun Yat-Sen as a boy had a rascally side to him. Hoisting boom mics and cameras, Wai'anae's students filmed their spirit of discovery and their youthful reactions.

"I enjoyed hearing the story about Sun as a young boy," said Evan Kam '07. "Sun's friend played a joke and bullied him. In retaliation, Sun broke the wok that his friend's family used. This story revealed a lighter side to Sun and made him seem like a regular person, especially since famous historical people like Sun are placed on pedestals."

The group also traveled north to the city of Nanjing where his mausoleum and tomb rest. While he died in 1925 in Beijing of liver cancer, his body was moved to Nanjing in 1929.

Chilly 20 degree temperatures did not hinder the students from hiking 392 ascending steps divided by ten platforms to the mausoleum. The final height is 70 meters, with a heavenly view that overlooks majestic mountains. A guard waved off photographers overlooking the tomb in a sunken circle of the mausoleum.

Just east is Nanjing's Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall. Here, Sarah Fang '09 and Karlyn Kurokawa '07 stopped to look at a large painting of Sun Yat-Sen at the age of 13 standing on the deck of a ship bound for Hawaii.

"Before going on this trip, we all did extensive research on him so that we practically knew his life story," Fang said. "However we were still able to learn a lot of new things about him."

Fang was born in China and entered 'Iolani in the 9th grade as a Freeman Scholar, a program that grants four years of 'Iolani tuition to students from Asia. On her application for admission, she wrote that she wanted to attend the school where Sun Yat-Sen studied.



This painting was among the exhibits in the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall in Nanjing.



After climbing nearly 400 steps to reach Sun Yat-Sen's mausoleum and tomb, students saw this view of Zhongshan Mountain National Park.

There is also a photograph of old 'Iolani School on display at the museum in Nanjing with the caption: "From 1879 to 1883, Dr. Sun received the western education successfully in Iolani School and Oahu College in Honolulu where his desire to reform his motherland was burgeoning. This is Iolani."

The trip then led students to Shanghai where they visited the residence where Sun Yat-Sen lived with Soong Ching Ling. They also toured the Shanghai University Film School and met with the dean and professors.



'Iolani and Wai'anae students visited several exhibits on Sun Yat-Sen. This was at the memorial hall in Nanjing.

"When people visited our school, they were surprised to see your students doing a story on Sun Yat-Sen," said **Jin Guanjun**, dean of the film school. "This story would be made by professionals. It's good to make a documentary to help Americans understand the greatness of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen."

From Shanghai, the group traveled north to Beijing where they visited the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation and met with **Cunyu Wu**, director general of the foundation.

Later in her life, Soong Ching Ling served as the Honorary President of the People's Republic of China. The foundation was established in 1982 to safeguard world peace and strive for social progress and people's happiness.

"Madame Soong Ching Ling did so much for women and children," Wu expressed. "And we don't want this to die down because she died."

The students agreed, reflecting on what they learned during their journey for which Waianae shot 50 hours of video tape and 2,000 still photographs.

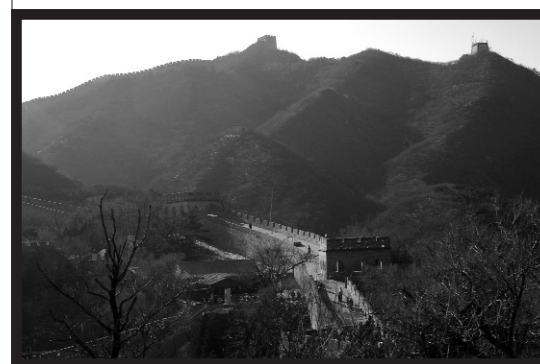


'Iolani and Wai'anae students viewed a film about Sun Yat-Sen at the Shanghai University Film School archives.

At a final dinner reception in Beijing, Otsuka and Kurokawa delivered a speech to about 30 guests living in Beijing with ties to Hawaii. 'Iolani alumnus and attorney **Russell Leu** '75 coordinated the event.

"After overthrowing the Ching Dynasty, Sun Yat-Sen brought the people of

China together under a single republic," relayed Otsuka. "Even now, Sun Yat-Sen has brought 'Iolani and Waianae together through this documentary. . . we hope that through this film, we can awaken the Sun Yat-Sen in others, just as he has awakened inside each of us."



The trip concluded with a visit to the Great Wall.

In Beijing, the 'Iolani and Wai'anae group met with Cunyu Wu, director general of the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation. Wu presented 'Iolani Director of Institutional Advancement **Jane Heimerdinger** with a portrait of Sun Yat-Sen and Soong Ching Ling. Attorney **Russell Leu** '75, right, coordinated a Beijing reception.



'IOLANI AND CHINA'S LONGTIME CONNECTION

Nearly 30 years ago, back in 1978, 'Iolani was the first Hawaii school to visit China when now retired Dean of Students **William Lee '53** led a tour of 37 students and 10 chaperones. Part of this group was also invited to meet Madame Soong Ching Ling in person.

"This was before diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China were established," Lee said. "China was beginning to reach out to the outside world. But we had to prepare the students because the feeling was very anti-American in China."



In 1978, streets of Beijing were filled with people dressed in white shirts. Today, people dress as individuals.

who took pictures at a train station. There were few cars and countless bicycles on the roads.

"When I tell people I was there in '78, they look at me like, 'whoa!'" said **Mel Kaneshige '66**, who was then a young attorney on the trip. "Before then, I never thought I'd have a chance to see the historical places I had read about."

'Iolani has long recognized the significance of China in its curriculum.

The school first offered Mandarin to students in the 1960s. Today, more than 120 high school students are enrolled in Mandarin, which is taught by two full time teachers.

Mandarin courses have also been available through 'Iolani's after school program for Lower School children, as well as through summer school for Upper School students. Last summer a new, popular course was "Chinese Language and Culture."

Since the first student tour to China in 1978, several others have been made by 'Iolani student groups, including recent summer trips sponsored by the Freeman Foundation.

Reaching beyond campus borders, 'Iolani last year published a set of beginning Mandarin language text books written by **Thomas Tze-yi Chao**, who taught at 'Iolani for 29 years. Other schools have already purchased these books for their students, and Chao recently completed a second level of the books which comes with two compact discs.

"There's definitely an increased interest in learning Mandarin because of China's growing prominence in the world," said 'Iolani Director of Special Programs Ann Yoneshige.



In 1978, People's Liberation Army guards stood in towers above the streets. The towers are no longer in use today.

Lee recalls the People's Liberation Army lining up and toting rifles at Loulu Bridge bordering Hong Kong and China. Barbed wire topped walls, and portraits of Mao Tse-Tung and other communist propaganda scenes were plastered in public places.

"I remember crossing the border, seeing the Red Guards, and thinking, 'I hope we return,'" reminisced 'Iolani Director of Special Programs **Ann Yoneshige**, who was a young teacher and chaperone on the trip.

Of the larger group, four students and six chaperones were granted a 45-minute visit with Soong Ching Ling at her Beijing home on July 29 that year, according to a story in the *Honolulu Advertiser*. They were not allowed to take photographs. The

students recited speeches in Mandarin and presented their distinguished hostess with gifts from Hawaii. In spite of her failing health, Soong Ching Ling welcomed the delegation from 'Iolani and honored the school from which her husband had graduated.

"It was an honor to go to China and to visit her," said **Earl Ching '80**, who was a junior in high school at the time and is now a member of the 'Iolani Board of Governors. "That visit has been the subject of a number of my children's essays in school."

Then China was different from the modern, more westernized country of today. Ching remembered that doors had no locks, and people could only drink plain bottled orange soda or water that had been sterilized by boiling. The communist guards watched them carefully, even confiscating a camera and film from one student



Now retired Dean of Students William Lee '53, far right, led the first 'Iolani School trip to China in July 1978 for nearly 50 people. Students and chaperones pose for a group photo. (Photo courtesy Ann Yoneshige)

DR. SUN'S LEGACY IN HAWAII

Like Sun Yat-Sen, generations ago, many more Chinese in Hawaii came from Guangdong Province in southern China. Descendants of Sun Yat-Sen's supporters still remember how their parents and grandparents were members of his revolutionary organizations such as the Hsing Chung Hui and Tung Meng Hui.

Raymond Lum, co-author of the book *Sun Yat-Sen in Hawaii: Activities and Supporters*, is the son of **Lum Chee**, a follower of Sun Yat-Sen who kept a collection of the revolutionary's letters and military bonds. Raymond Lum donated them to the Sun Yat-Sen Society in Beijing in 1985.

"During his years at Iolani and Punahou, he was exposed to Western culture, was strongly influenced by it, and in his young mind, the seeds of Western democracy were planted," Lum wrote.


Even though Hawaii is geographically isolated and small, compared to the rest of the world, this island community was able to influence a boy who would eventually lead the most populated country in the world and now a powerful economic leader.

"We helped create that in some way," said Steven Ai, "because we helped educate one of their leaders."

Iolani archivist **Romy Panko** talks with many visitors each year from China who want to see the school that Sun Yat-Sen attended.

One of them was the governor of Guangdong Province, **Huang Huahua**, and his delegation which arrived by limousine and tour bus on October 13, 2005. They paid their respects to his statue and heard a presentation in Mandarin by students **Jeff Yang '06** and **Roberta Wong '06**.

Plans are being made to create a Sun Yat-Sen garden on campus where his statue will be prominently and permanently displayed and honored. The pedestrian walkway, Convention Drive, will also be landscaped to reflect a Chinese theme in honor of his legacy. Panels describing significant aspects of his life will accentuate the area so that future generations of 'Iolani students can be inspired by his remarkable part in world history.

"Sun Yat-Sen, a member of the Class of 1882, is our most famous graduate," said Headmaster Dr. **Val Iwashita '67**. "The impact he had in bringing forth modern China was monumental and is felt to this day. We would do well to emulate his leadership and his courage, and, as such, his legacy is important to celebrate and to preserve. We are proud to call him one of our own." 

'Iolani School was the first and longest chapter of Sun Yat Sen's Western education.

THE BIG THREE



The rapid changes in China are revealed in this story told by **Jerry Mao**, a tour guide in Beijing with the China Travel Service.

Mao told the 'Iolani and Waianae students that, according to Chinese culture and society, before his father was allowed to get married he had to have the "Big Three" first. These three were a watch, a sewing machine and a bike.

But when his father's younger brother got married, the Big Three had changed just as the country around them was becoming more modern and western. The Big Three became a television, a refrigerator and a washing machine.

Now Mao, who is in his late 20s, wants to get married to his sweetheart. But before he can settle down, he must accumulate the new "Big Two" which are a car and an apartment.

*China Travel Service tour guide
Jerry Mao.*