

# BEATING THE ODDS

BY CATHY LEE CHONG

**Iolani graduates share personal stories that reflect overcoming life's challenges**



*Alan Gin '74 with his wife, Lianne, and daughter, Courtney. Family is the grounding force in his life.*



that so many people would take me in," Gin recalls. "The school never turned its back on me. I used to wonder if my friends and teachers really knew."

"Alan didn't let on that he was having difficulties," Lee says. "If anyone had known, they would have tried to accommodate him or help. He was a good student, always helpful, courteous and resourceful."

Today, Gin bases his own management style on the Stone Scholarship program, which attempts to unleash potential in promising youths. He is also working on an Innovation Scholarship program with other CEOs to offer young people similar benefits.

"My teachers always said that 'You're here because we see potential in you,'" Gin says. "Mr. Lee always said that's why you're a Stone Scholar. I was forced to grow up at age 14 and live dual lives, and I was grateful for others believing in me during tumultuous times. People were always taking me in without my asking."

As a scholarship student, Gin worked in Iolani's main office where he completed various jobs under the supervision of Lee and secretaries **Linda Ching** and **Sharon Takara**. He remembers that Lee disciplined boys, not with a heavy hand, but with a heavy heart. "He didn't yell, he just had to utter 'I'm disappointed in you boys,'" Gin says.

"I heard every word Mr. Lee taught me. He would come to school sick and I would ask, 'Shouldn't you be home in bed?' and he would say, 'I have to be here for you boys.' He taught me the meaning of commitment."

He still quotes his high school teachers, especially if the quotation does not directly pertain to the class subjects they taught. The experiences resonate. At Iolani, one of his teachers introduced the "Butterfly Effect" by **Edward Lorenz** to the class. The premise is that one flap of a butterfly's wings could alter the course of weather forever, just as an insignificant act of kindness sets off ripples that touch others unaware.

He also recollects **Don Lev**, another teacher who inspired him to see the world through a child's eyes. A child continues to ask why, even after the question appears answered. "Ask why, and then ask again," Lev had told him.

The odds against Gin going to college were high, as no one in his family had done so, and not many had even finished high school. Then, through a chain of events, Gin got to meet his biological father, who encouraged him to pursue higher education. Gin was accepted into Stanford University, but he went to Hawaii Pacific College, now Hawaii Pacific University, on a tennis scholarship. The school didn't have a tennis team, but Gin was charged with recruiting new students and starting a team. He hustled to make ends meet, working multiple jobs to pay his bills and tuition not covered by the scholarship. Sometimes he slept in his car. Gin was a messenger, a florist, valet and a salesman. "I was extremely analytical and had to be the best at whatever job I took on," he says. "I was often working three jobs while in school

which required multi-tasking that has served me well."

Prior to graduation he suffered from a debilitating car accident and exorbitant medical bills forced him to continue working while in pain. Life was hard.

"Failure was not an option, but I struggled with the challenges of not knowing my purpose in life," he says. "I must have studied six different religions in college until realizing that peace comes from within. Once you give up the struggle everything falls into place."

Meanwhile, Gin's mother remarried and he respected his new stepfather. One day, on a beach on Kauai, Gin remembers his stepfather telling him: "In life, there are only two choices, the right choice or the wrong choice. Most people attempt to reconcile and choose the next best thing, a weak compromise on values that will, ultimately, turn out to be the wrong choice."

Gin began seeking only right choices.

In the late 1970s, Gin earned his real estate license and became a broker for the Locations agency, which was installing a computer system to manage large amounts of data. "I was intrigued with the process and power of information," he says. This began his computer experiences.

By fate, he and Lianne, who graduated from McKinley High School and the University of Hawaii, hooked up later in life. They bumped into each other at a bank where she was a teller, years after first meeting at Washington Intermediate and

after seeing each other at a high school social. “I was trying to cash a commission check while prospecting the bank workers for real estate referrals,” Gin says. “We became best friends and married a few years later. Lianne helped me to stop running from my past and start running toward our future.” Eventually, they tagged along on the honeymoon of Iolani classmate **Garrett Nose** ’74 in San Francisco. The two ended up staying in the city and never looked back.

Friends describe Gin as the “Forrest Gump of Technology,” perhaps because he stands in the background of momentous technological breakthroughs in black-and-white, while everyone else is grey. “Life is like a box of chocolates,” he quotes Gump. But the comparison is likely due to his career unfolding after unforeseeable coincidences, connections, as if from flutters of butterfly wings.

Ten years after graduating from Iolani, in 1984, Gin was in San Francisco, newly married and starting his first company with seven partners. It was called Data Integrity and was awarded the first Novell dealership for California. Novell became one of the world’s top networking software companies and orders poured in to Gin and his team.

As at Iolani, Gin turned each situation into a learning experience.

With Data Integrity, he learned how to build a business.

At Coopers & Lybrand, he learned auditing and security. To be a good auditor, one must question and ask why again and again, like a child. He began traveling and speaking on computer security, meeting leaders in the industry.

At Wang, he learned first-hand, how vulnerable large government systems are to failure. (Ironically, he supervised Wang employees who had turned him down for a sales job when he lived in Hawaii.)

At AT&T, Gin was exposed to how the world is networked through telecommunication systems that are built to withstand failure. He was also introduced to Unix and large banking and country infrastructures.

At StorageTek, his team architected storage strategies for some of the largest companies in the world along with highly sensitive government operations.

At Hitachi, he learned mainframe connectivity to open systems and launched the first production Storage Area Network to withstand a natural disaster.

“Technologies are not built to last more than a few years; they are designed with selling cycles in mind,” Gin says. “Since 1984, I realized that I was building systems that could fail. So I decided that a select group of us would architect a system that never fails... ZeroNines was founded in 2000, but in my mind, I was looking for this solution since 1984.”

Today, Gin’s high standards for his company and business are rooted in the high expectations set at Iolani. The tagline for ZeroNines is “A world without downtime.” Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, the company has created a simple yet elegant solution which protects information regardless of computer platform, storage strategy, networking protocol and, above all, distance. “The tragic events of 9/11 sensitized the world to how vulnerable we really are. Our technology mitigates the risk of ever losing information anywhere in the world,” he says.

Today, Gin and his wife have been married 20 years and live outside San Francisco. They have a daughter Courtney, 16, an artist and 4.0 honor student, who was named Most Valuable Player on her tennis team. Her high school’s colors are red, black and white.

“Lianne is the grounding force in my life,” Gin says. “She allows me to flap my butterfly wings. She taught me that family and friends never take each other for granted and support each other unconditionally. I found unconditional love in family.”

The support of his family is essential to the demands of his globetrotting business schedule. He puts in 80 to 100 hours per week and travels 50 weeks out of the year, visiting different computer systems around the world. He was scheduled to be at the World Trade Center on September 11, but his meeting was coincidentally cancelled. While away, he calls his wife and daughter everyday.

Yet, now and then, something reminds him of Iolani’s Lee. “When I’m on the road and I feel a little overwhelmed, I call Mr. Lee to talk to him,” Gin says. “People like Mr. Lee, who have that butterfly effect, are so important.”

Now, when Gin makes hiring and staffing decisions, he looks for potential, not handicaps. It’s just as Iolani taught him. He seeks people with passion, who believe they have not yet reached their potential, and who are still striving, searching and asking why.

●  
**Have the courage of conviction to do what you believe is right.**

●  
**When you feel lost, pray/meditate for guidance.**

The answers are always within.

Sometimes we get turned around and upside down, but we are never really lost, merely disoriented.

●  
**Seek balance, but never achieve it.**

Allow for creative tension to continually provide opportunities for growth.

●  
**You will only prosper by helping others achieve their potential.**

We are not on this earth alone.

What is the value of success without others to share in it?

●  
**Respect and appreciate others for their differences.**

●  
**Ask why, and then ask why again.**

●  
**Focus, and then focus some more.**

●  
**Maintain a sense of humor.**

— Alan Gin ’74 —



## Diagnosed with MS, **Liane Mark '95** campaigns to help others

*Freshly graduated from Iolani and Yale University, Liane Mark '95 held the keys to a promising future. When recently diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she refused to let it blemish her dreams.*

**Liane Mark '95** filled her days as an Iolani student with lots of activities and achievements. She graduated *cum laude*, played tennis, danced, chaired the student council, swam, tutored, won the 1995 Hawaii Junior Miss title, and volunteered for numerous community service projects. One of them was a multiple sclerosis fund-raiser. She had no idea MS would later alter her life.

After graduating from Yale University in 1999, Mark returned to Hawaii to pursue graduate studies at the University of Hawaii. She also won the Miss Oahu Pageant and came in first runner-up in the Miss Hawaii Scholarship Pageant in 2000.

But several months later, on the very night Mark was crowned Miss Waikiki, she noticed a strange feeling in her feet and legs. She thought the numb and tingling sensation was due to the 4-inch heels she was wearing. Then it started spreading up her torso and, after a month, reached her hands.

She went to see a doctor, who immediately sent her to a neurologist. In February 2001, Mark was admitted to Kaiser Permanente Medical Center at Moanalua where she underwent a range of tests, including spinal taps and MRIs, for five days.

She was diagnosed, at age 23, with multiple sclerosis (MS).

"They were expecting to find a tumor on my spine, but what they found were many areas without myelin, the fatty substance on the nerve cells that help speed up conduction of nerve impulses," Mark said in a *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* article.

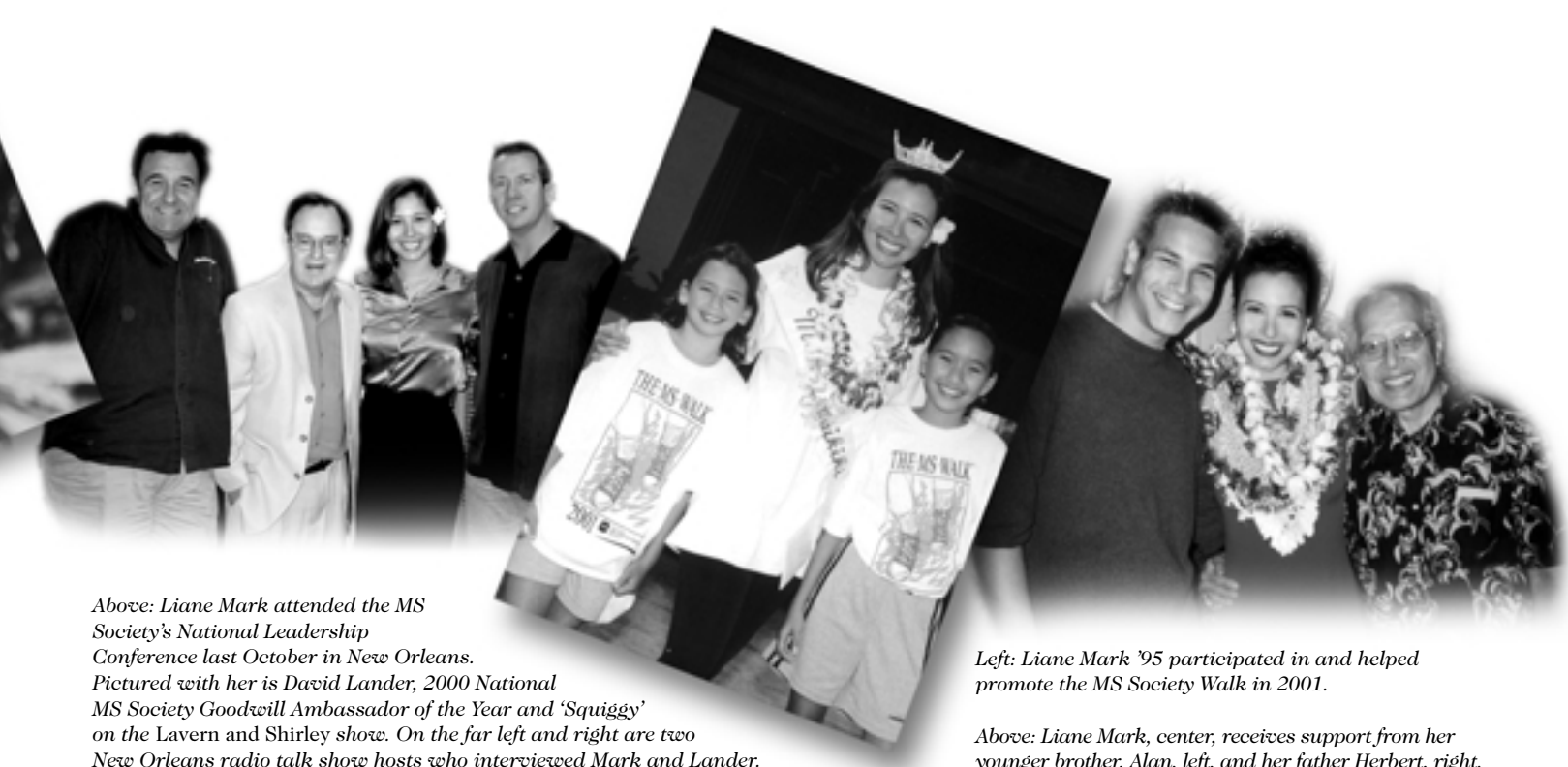
MS is a chronic, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. Symptoms may be as mild as numbness in the limbs or as severe as paralysis or loss of vision. There is no cure.

But something her pastor said during her stay in the hospital has stayed with her. "He told me, 'Don't ask why. Ask what is your plan, Lord, and how can I use this to help other people,'" she said.

Mark accepted her condition and took control of the situation. She called 1-800-FIGHTMS to learn everything she could. She talked to **Lyn Moku**, Hawaii division manager for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, who, in turn, talked to Mark about becoming a National Goodwill Ambassador for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Now Mark averages 10,000-plus miles per month in travel around the country spreading awareness about MS, raising funds for research, and meeting others fighting the disease. Her expenses are covered by a pharmaceutical company that manufactures Avonex, the weekly injections which help to prevent brain atrophy. To decrease the inflammation in her brain and spine, she had to take steroids for a few weeks. She still has numbness and tingling, but fortunately, so far, Mark's symptoms have been mild.

"Being a Goodwill Ambassador is a way of reaching a lot of people and helping other MS patients," Mark says. "But it is also a way of helping myself. Just knowing you may have a positive impact on someone,



*Above: Liane Mark attended the MS Society's National Leadership Conference last October in New Orleans. Pictured with her is David Lander, 2000 National MS Society Goodwill Ambassador of the Year and 'Squiggly' on the Lavern and Shirley show. On the far left and right are two New Orleans radio talk show hosts who interviewed Mark and Lander.*

*Left: Liane Mark '95 participated in and helped promote the MS Society Walk in 2001.*

*Above: Liane Mark, center, receives support from her younger brother, Alan, left, and her father Herbert, right.*



*“Just knowing you may have a positive impact on someone, especially someone coping with the disease, is very reassuring and inspiring. That’s where I gain a lot of strength.”*

*Liane Mark '95*



especially someone coping with the disease, is very reassuring and inspiring. That’s where I gain a lot of strength.”

Mark encourages those suffering from MS, or any condition, not to be afraid to ask for help and to let others in. She knows sometimes pride gets in the way but encourages people to not let it.

Also, she advises people to pray and trust in God. “There is a reason for everything,” she says. “You’ve got to take what’s given to you and make the most of it.”

Mark is certainly making the most out of life.

She is getting ready for the MS Walk on April 6 at McCoy Pavilion. She will also be competing in the Miss Hawaii Scholarship Pageant on June 7 with her platform of advocating for funds for multiple sclerosis programs and research. She was life-guarding and teaching swimming at the YWCA, and continues modeling and acting. She was named one of the 2001 Three Outstanding Young People by the Hawaii Jaycees. She bridges her high school and college worlds by volunteering to interview Iolani students applying to Yale.

This past November, her boyfriend **Alex Daniels**, a stunt man/stunt director, proposed by placing a diamond ring in her wineglass over dinner. The two met while filming episodes of *Baywatch Hawaii*.

Mark blushes when she describes her fiancé’s initial reaction to her condition. Sullenly, she broke the news to him and

added that MS is a disease that will not go away. His reply: “I’m not going away either.”

Wearing a bikini, Mark also graces the cover of the recent Pipeline Band CD *Island Surfer Girl* in which she sings a song as well. Her good voice has been with her since her Iolani days. She sang in school musicals and, at Yale, belonged to two *cappella* groups, performing around the world.

Since MS primarily attacks young, seemingly healthy adults between the ages of 20 and 40, Mark is a classic example of someone who did not suspect this coming — an active lifeguard, beauty queen, graduate student and model. The disease surprised everyone, especially her friends and family.

But what is even more surprising is Mark’s courage and conviction to help others, in spite of MS’s seriousness and uncertainty.

“I decided early that I wouldn’t live in fear of the unknown,” she says. “I am going to continue doing what I want to do and being a productive citizen of the world.”

Mark’s life is still filled with activities and achievements. Now she’s also filling the lives of others with hope, inspiration and goodwill.

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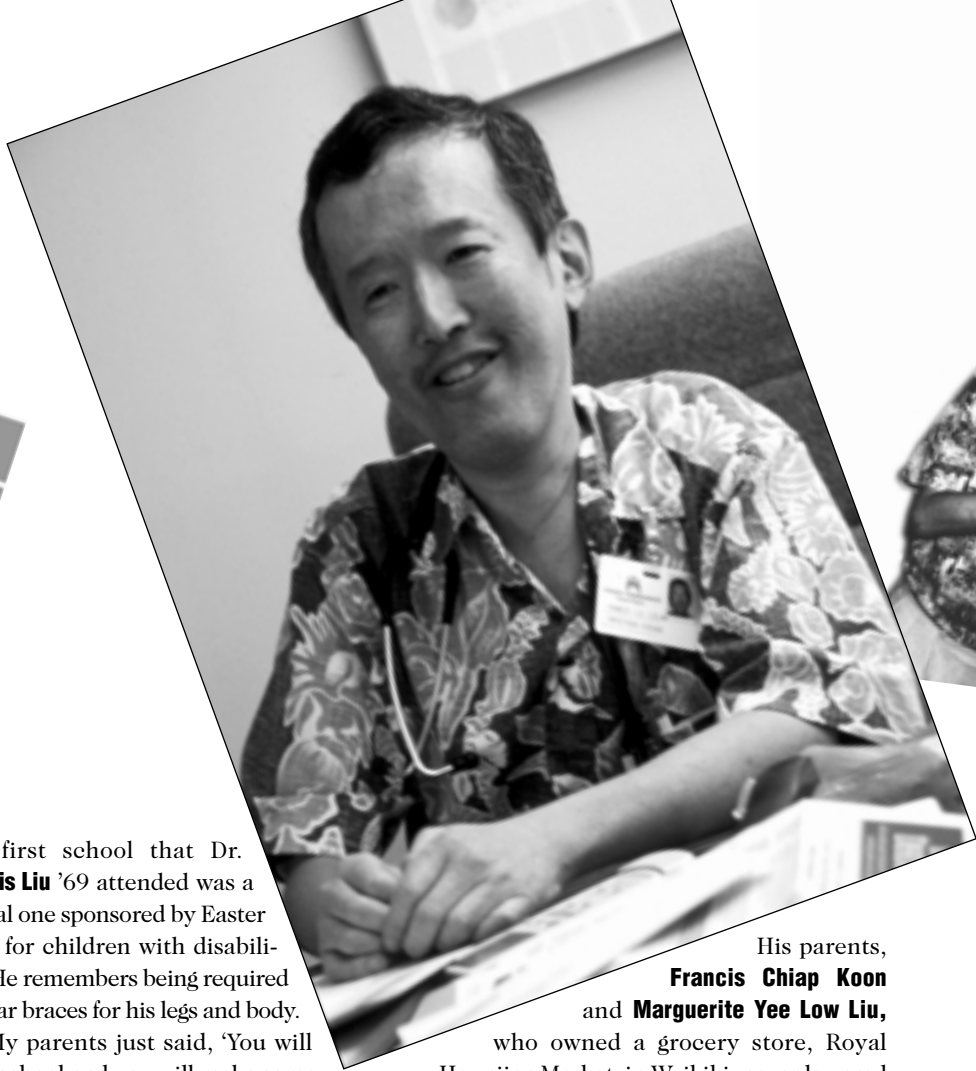
Beating  
the odds,  
**Dr. Francis Liu '69**  
perseveres  
in spite of a  
lifelong  
muscle  
disorder

The first school that Dr. **Francis Liu** '69 attended was a special one sponsored by Easter Seals for children with disabilities. He remembers being required to wear braces for his legs and body.

"My parents just said, 'You will go to school and you will make something of yourself,'" Liu says.

Even when he applied to enter Iolani in the ninth grade, his disability was never an issue or deterrent, nor was it when he applied to Stanford University for undergraduate studies and to the University of California at San Diego for medical school.

Now as chief of infectious diseases at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Liu's story epitomizes beating the odds. An unassuming man with a droll sense of humor and candid demeanor, Liu has a small frame and a big smile. He was born with a muscle disorder, close to muscular dystrophy, but never clearly understood by doctors. No one else in his family suffered from this condition. He has never had normal control or strength in his legs or torso. As a boy, he managed to walk on his own, but going up a staircase demanded more time and a railing for support. Today, he uses a cane to walk short distances, and rides in a battery-powered chair to make the half-mile distance between his Kaiser office and an adjoining hospital wing easily accessible. He continues to see orthopedic surgeons for medical care.



His parents,  
**Francis Chiap Koon**  
and **Marguerite Yee Low Liu,**

who owned a grocery store, Royal Hawaiian Market, in Waikiki, never lowered their expectations in spite of Liu's disability. He attended Hawaii Baptist Academy for elementary and middle school prior to Iolani. He has one brother **James** '72.

"The hardest part about going to Iolani was getting up to the second floor to go to the library," Liu says.

During his senior year, Liu was awarded the prestigious Scholarship Medal for achieving the highest academic ranking of his class. An article in the *Iolani Bulletin* summer 1969 issue described him as "one of the most congenial academic superstars ... (with) an innate modesty that is refreshing." In his sophomore year, he won six academic awards. In the summer of his junior year, he received a \$500 award to do cardiovascular research at the University of Hawaii.

Athletics were the only part of Iolani's program that he had to forgo, though he loved sports, especially baseball. He does recall some teasing from other kids but looks back at his Iolani days with only fond memories.

"I know that there were a few times that it did bother me," he says, "but I had the good fortune of having many friends who it didn't matter to."



*Below left:  
Left to right, Dr. Francis Liu '69, Colleen Liu '01, Debra Liu and Peter Liu '05 celebrate Colleen's graduation from Iolani last year.*



*Above: Dr. Francis Liu '69 has always been an active parent, even when his children were young. Liu with wife Debra, daughter Colleen Liu '01, and son Peter Liu '05.*

After Iolani, Liu graduated from Stanford where living on campus for four years made access to classes manageable, and he “didn’t have to deal with snow there,” he says. At one point, he considered becoming a mathematician but decided to pursue medicine because of its “ability to help people” and its broad applications. He knew he didn’t want to become a surgeon, because he couldn’t stand on his feet all day. But Liu persevered through the surgical rotation in medical school, despite an agonizing 9 consecutive hours on his feet. He graduated from the UC San Diego medical school and then went to the University of Utah in Salt Lake City for his residency in internal medicine and infectious disease control.

While in Utah, he met **Debra Young**, a Chinese-American nurse from Wyoming who worked in a nearby hospital. They were married and had their first child, **Colleen** '01, now a freshman at the University of Washington, while living in Salt Lake City. The Lius moved to Hawaii and had their son, **Peter** '05. His daughter is a talented pianist, while his son is on the Iolani paddling and track teams. A Kaiser nurse, who plays the piano and clarinet, his wife is an active volunteer at Iolani.

“I was really fortunate they got to go to Iolani,” he says of his children. “I really didn’t want them to go anywhere else. I get goose bumps every time I go on campus.”

Liu maintained a private practice at St. Francis Hospital for seven years before joining Kaiser in 1989. As director of

*“I learned that there are more important things in life. I’ve had the opportunity to do a lot of other things, like watching my kids grow up and seeing them go to the school I went to.”*

*Dr. Francis Liu '69*

infectious diseases, Liu works with the state Department of Health and monitors infection control within the hospital. He deals with cases that involve dangerous bacteria and viruses, such as Dengue fever, anthrax, and tuberculosis. He tests for strains of viruses that could afflict unsuspecting people.

He is one of the physicians who volunteers to administer free flu shots through the Salvation Army’s Adult Rehabilitation Center. The program was launched by the Department of Health after doctors found at least half the men in the center had the flu.

He is also active with Kaimuki Christian Church and his Iolani Class of 1969. Liu returns to campus for the Family Fair to volunteer in the corn-on-the-cob booth. He also cherishes seeing familiar faces, such as his biology teacher **Jack Kay**. “There must be something about the school that makes teachers want to hang in there all these years,” he adds.

What has inspired Liu to hang in there? “Don’t give up and trust in God,” he says. “That should get you through. I was fortunate to have these opportunities, like my parents sending me to Iolani. God has been good to me. He always has.”

He brushes off praise for his accomplishments, as though his challenges were no more extraordinary than obstacles anyone else faces. He doesn’t know if his disability makes those around him uneasy or whether others see him differently, he just knows his condition has never tainted his enthusiasm, ambition, ability to succeed, and his zeal for life.

“I always wanted to play sports and I never could,” Liu says. “But I learned that there are more important things in life. I’ve had the opportunity to do a lot of other things, like watching my kids grow up and seeing them go to the school I went to.”



*Above: Danny Yamashiro '86 makes a powerful delivery.*

After a 400-foot fall from the Pali, **Rev. Dr. Danny Yamashiro '86** miraculously survived and now serves the spiritual needs of others

In high school, **Danny Yamashiro '86** dreamed of becoming a great football player. His father, **David '51**, was an all-star halfback on the Iolani championship team in 1950 and played for legendary coach Father **Kenneth A. Bray**. But his dream changed in his senior year at Iolani.

On December 22, 1985, Yamashiro and a friend **Stacy Loui '87** embarked on a hike along the Pali in Nuuanu. They followed a narrow trail, but when the trail ended, they decided to go on. They tried to create a path by holding on to tree branches, limbs, and rocks protruding from the ground. The pair scaled deeper and higher up the ridge.

Loui slipped and fell, but when Yamashiro started to make his way down to her, he lost his grip and plummeted 400 feet.

His scalp had been ripped off and his skull was fractured in three places. Sharp branches and rocks had cut his body seriously. His ankle was also shattered and his internal organs smashed. He lost a lot of blood and was in a state of shock.

"I don't remember the fall," Yamashiro says. Placed in a transport basket, Yamashiro was airlifted by helicopter from the Pali and taken to St. Francis Medical Center. "I was in a coma for a week. Doctors didn't give me much hope and people thought I had died."

After a month in the hospital and several different surgeries, Yamashiro was released with 70 stitches in his scalp, his left leg in a cast, and stitches on his back, arms and legs. His eyes were bruised and swollen and

he had lost 45 pounds. He needed extensive therapy to rebuild his strength. A team of doctors worked to save him, three of whom were Iolani graduates: Dr. **Dudley Seto '51**, Dr. **Calvin Kam '52**, and the late Dr. **Albert Chun Hoon '49**.

"God used the fall to put me on a different path," Yamashiro says. "That was a turning point in my life."

Nearly 17 years have passed since his near death experience.

Today, Yamashiro is the founder and president of Jesus Christ is Calling You ministries. He earned bachelor's, master's and a doctorate of biblical studies degrees. He hosted the cable television program *Prayerline Hawaii* and two radio programs. He teaches courses at the International College & Graduate School. He travels to Asia, Africa and across the United States on missions, holding evangelical rallies and helping fulfill the needs of the impoverished for food, medicine and spiritual guidance. With his father, he also recently opened the Christ's Church at Kapolei.

Yamashiro thanks God for his miraculous recovery and for guiding him through his life's journey. He also emphasizes that Iolani played a tremendous part in getting him back on his feet so that he could still graduate in 1986.

"The faculty and many other people did so much," he says. "Mr. **(Dan) Feldhaus** tutored me privately so that I could graduate with my class. He made arrangements





Right: His book *Paradise Calls* was based on his fall at the Pali.



Above: Danny Yamashiro '86 with wife Jamie.



“God used the fall to put me on a different path,” Yamashiro says.

“That was a turning point in my life.”

– Danny Yamashiro '86



with the other teachers so that I could get tutored and complete my homework. Mr. **(Eddie) Hamada** '46 helped me throughout. He was at the hospital every day. If I didn't graduate from Iolani, who knows what would have happened.”

Yamashiro married the former **Jamie Tokuda** in 1993. They have two children, Allie, 7, and Hugh, 4, and a baby on the way.

He has also written three books, one of which, *Paradise Calls*, details the events leading up to and following his fall at the Pali.

“It was the Lord Jesus that helped me through it,” he says. “He rescued me. There is no other way of saying it. I didn't merit his favor. I credit the Lord Jesus. He gave me a good family and friends who really stood by me.”



Right: In Kenya, East Africa, were four generations of Iolani alumni. Left to right, Rev. David Yamashiro '51, Rev. Owen Tanouye '76, Faleasiu Hvidding, Bernard Hvidding, Michelle Takayama '96, and Rev. Dr. Danny Yamashiro '86. They were on the Jesus Christ is Calling You (JCCY) Paradise Global Mission Kenya 2001. Takayama, serving in the Peace Corps, joined the mission for dinner.