

“You Have the Positive Approach”

Reuben D. Law, 1954-59

Chapter One

Toward the end of a meeting at LDS Church headquarters in Salt Lake City on July 20, 1954, President David O. McKay reached over and clasped the hand of Reuben D. Law. “You have a big job,” President McKay said quietly.¹



Reuben J. Law

If it hadn't been for the experiences of Brother Law in higher education and his steadying hand and sometimes rather heavy hand, I don't know that this college would have come through some rather trying times at the beginning.

*Nephi Georgi,
faculty member*

The acknowledgement reassured Law about his new responsibilities as president of an unknown college he was charged to create. As dean of the College of Education at Brigham Young University in Provo, the fifty-two-year old Law was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the assignment outlined to him during the previous two weeks.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, led by the dynamic educator McKay, had determined to establish a junior college in La'ie, Hawai'i; and Law had been selected as its first president. His job was to help turn President McKay's vision of a college into reality.

“I shall need your blessing,” Law said to the Church leader he revered as prophet, seer, and revelator. President McKay responded immediately: “You have my sincere blessing. You have my full confidence. You have the positive approach, not the negative approach.”

Humbled but confident, Law said he hoped he would be able to maintain the positive approach that he knew was essential for implementing the dream President McKay had cherished for a third of a century. With the same confidence in Law that he had in his vision, the eighty-one-year old President McKay told Law, “You will.”²

Law's meeting with President McKay, his counselor J. Reuben Clark, and other LDS educators, signaled that, after more than three decades of deliberation, a new era in LDS education was about to begin. It's spiritual lineage can be traced back to a revelation by President McKay which has linked successive waves of men, women, and children, faculty and students, and millions of outsiders to La'ie.

The idea was formed when Elder McKay, then a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and the Church's Commissioner of Education, was on a 62,000-mile world tour of missions in February 1921. During a Hawai'i stopover, he observed 127 children ranging from ages seven to fifteen at a flag-raising ceremony

outside the LDS Church-owned elementary school in La'ie. They represented many ethnicities: Hawai'ian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Caucasian students.

As Elder McKay regarded them, he envisioned an even greater Church school. In meeting with missionaries on Maui the next day, he learned that they felt the mission's greatest need was "a Church institution of higher learning."³ He made a recommendation to that effect, but it was not until he became president of the Church himself that his vision was implemented.

Law had to start from scratch, nailing down the thousand and one details taken for granted in an institution already operating. And many apparently simple questions brought a cascade of other questions, a domino effect of multiplying decisions: How would the college be financed? Exactly where would the college be located? What facilities would be



It was conceived back through the years by our leaders, was officially announced through the press, radio, and television through the First Presidency of the Church, July 21, 1954, and after extensive advance planning of organization, curriculum, buildings, equipment, finance and personnel, it officially opened September 18, 1955.

When a new baby is born in a family, there is sometimes a wet blanket, some loss of sleep, some frustrations and adjusting to the environment in which the babe finds itself, some use of the vocal cords in ways that are not always understood, variously interpreted, sometimes resented. Sometimes the babe gets the colic. You may have another name for it.

But with proper care, persistence, and the right kind of nourishment, growth takes place; physical health, emotional and mental health are developed and the growing babe learns to manipulate, first, in a very limited fashion and then with greater coordination. The child usually learns to crawl, then toddles, gets balance, then walks, finally runs.⁴⁴

*President Reuben D. Law,
speaking of the birth of the Church College of Hawai'i*

During a world tour stopover in Hawai'i, President McKay observed 127 children ranging from ages seven to fifteen at a flag-raising ceremony outside the LDS Church-owned elementary school in La'ie on the island of Oahu.

They represented many ethnicities: Hawai'ian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Caucasian students. As Elder McKay regarded them, he envisioned an even greater Church school.

available? What would the curriculum be? Where would Law find an adventuresome faculty, willing to invest their careers in an unaccredited college? And what students would come to an island speck in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, more than three thousand miles from California, in a remote rural community in a territory that had not yet achieved statehood?



Old La'ie

In those days preceding jetliner travel, Hawai'i was exotic, distant, and served primarily by steamship. It had been a U.S. territory since 1900, but its population—largely native Hawaiians, Polynesians, and Asians—was very different from the common image of “Americans.” Many of the territory’s most ambitious young people felt frustrated. How could they advance themselves in a territory that lacked economic and political power and offered only limited educational opportunities?

The college envisioned by President McKay would be part of a larger trend that gave thousands of Americans the chance to progress educationally. Bruce Hafen, who served as president of the LDS Church’s Ricks College, then as provost at BYU in Provo, remembered that after the end of World War II, gaining a college degree had moved from being an American luxury toward being an American necessity.

The G.I. Bill and the economic and technological expansion of the postwar period had truly democratized higher education, not only by making a college degree financially available to a whole generation of men but also by establishing the cultural value of education as the basis of the good life. College was no longer just for the elite and wealthy few—it was for everybody who had the will and the wit to give it a try.⁵ But like those seeking the education, those who were to help provide it needed equal will and sacrifice.

Law’s Background

The leader responsible for answering those questions was born and educated in Utah. He and his family would sacrifice much to help turn a prophet’s vision into buildings, books, and students. Born into a ranching family in Avon, Utah, Law had been a coach, truant officer, principal, college professor, member of the LDS Sunday School General Board, and since 1946, dean of BYU’s College of Education. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Utah State University and his Ed.D. from the University of Southern California. He and his wife, Leda, were the parents of four daughters and a son.

Zola Rae Law Ash vividly remembered the Law family council after President Wilkinson passed on the news to Law that President McKay had selected him to head the new college. Dominant in his daughter's memory was her father's desire to serve the prophet.⁶

Law recorded a sketchy account of that family meeting after he told his wife, who "expressed a willingness to adjust to a new situation." When he told the children, "All members of the family were surprised and pleased. The whole thing was talked over very democratically and then each one individually expressed a choice as to what the family decision should be. One could well wish for an exact recording of that momentous family meeting. The expressions made by my wife and children showed a most wholesome attitude."⁷

Leda Law's supportiveness made her a full partner in the college-building enterprise even though daughter Zola recalled that the new assignment was likely the hardest on her mother. The Laws had built a new home, completely furnished with new items, on University Avenue in Provo. Because of weight limitations, families weren't allowed to bring much to Hawai'i, so Leda cheerfully "gave away what the family had collected in thirty years of marriage."

Then she took on the ill-defined but time-consuming role of being the campus mother. She worried about the new faculty families, organized the women, cared about many of the students' problems, and greeted and entertained constantly.⁸ Zola summed up her parents' contribution: "[Mother] loved people, warts and all. She was strict with herself and totally tolerant of others. Love flowed from her to all around her. No one but the Lord will ever know how Reuben and Leda worked to build CCH."⁹

Mother loved people, warts and all. She was strict with herself and totally tolerant of others. Love flowed from her to all around her. No one but the Lord will ever know how Reuben and Leda worked to build CCH.

Zola Rae Law Ash

Those Who Helped Him

Along with his wife, Law received aid from many others in Utah and in Hawai'i. Law's greatest advantage was President McKay's instructions to report directly to the First Presidency. Almost certainly, the young college could not have been ready to start within a year after he met with President McKay if Law did not have the benefit of President McKay's decisive ability to slice through red tape.

On paper, Law's title was "dean" of The Church College of Hawai'i and, like other college deans in the Church educational system, he should have reported through Ernest Wilkinson, administrator of the Unified Church School System.¹⁰

However, Law could take his building and operating budget to the Church Finance Committee, who expedited his requests knowing that the financial commitments represented McKay's wishes.

"They weren't just rubber stamps," he explained. "I am sure that men of that caliber—if they found some error somewhere—they'd speak out on it. But [my access to President McKay] was, of course, an advantage."¹¹ It was a tremendous opportunity to share the "planning with President McKay who remained keenly interested in the fortunes of the college."¹²



Pictured above: (l to r) Joseph Wilson (Superintendent of Construction), George Lake (Chief Foreman), Magdeline Lake, and President Law, in the cane field where the Church College of Hawai'i was built.

The college is really to be at La'ie and I know that's where the Lord wants it and that's where it's going to be.

Pres. David O. McKay

Law frequently arranged his schedule to arrive at the Church Administration Building at 6:15 a.m. before the offices were opened. When President McKay, a routinely early riser, pulled up in his black sedan at 6:30 a.m. Law was often waiting for him with questions about how best to proceed. He found President McKay unfailingly cordial and unhurried, greeting him with: "Good morning, Brother Law. Come in."

While Law attempted not to abuse the privilege of direct contact, he was very grateful that President McKay's involvement expedited important matters on several occasions. In the spirit of wanting the college to be credible when it opened, President McKay also gave Law permission to revise the budget much more favorably than had been originally approved.¹³

Also encouraging was Greg Sinclair, president of the University of Hawai'i. Sinclair had visited BYU in Provo two years earlier and had met President McKay in Salt Lake City. He told Law, "I was just royally treated and given such a nice welcome. I love the man."

As a result, his attitude was: "We're glad to have you Mormons come out here and establish a college because we know with people like you doing it, it will be done well and done right."¹⁵ Law received similar encouragement from Territorial Superintendent of Education Clayton Chamberlain, who told Law he was happy to hear about the plans to build an LDS college. "We see every reason why it will be to our advantage and not in any way to our disadvantage."¹⁶

Law was also fortunate in his friendship with Willard E. Givens, executive secretary of the National Education Association, whom Law had invited to BYU's summer school as a visiting professor in the College of Education. Givens had lived in Hawai'i as territorial superintendent of public instruction.

“He knew the people. Out of the goodness of his heart, and his professional interest he wanted to help us in any way he could,” recalled Law. “He provided me with introductory letters to a good many of these officials in Hawai’i who he knew and I made good use of them.”¹⁷

Board of Trustees

Governance for the fledgling college also evolved. The earliest references are to the local “continuing advisory committee,” but as early as February 1955, this group was known as the Board of Trustees. The Hawai’i-based board was achieved by redefining the Church’s schools in the Pacific as “missionary operations,” which moved them out from under the Church Board of Education which Wilkinson headed.

Law could not have asked for a more knowledgeable or supportive first board during the planning stages. Chairing the board was Edward LaVaun Clissold, manager of a Honolulu savings and loan company, long-time resident of the islands, and well-seasoned in many senior ecclesiastical positions. Ralph E. Woolley, contractor of the Honolulu Tabernacle and Oahu Stake president, was vice-chair.

George Q. Cannon III, a counselor in the Hawai’i Mission Presidency, was the namesake grandson to legendary Hawaiian



Joseph Spurrier (pictured above), one of the original faculty members, summed up the singular position in which the college found itself:

“With a separate board of trustees and sort of being under the personal protection, if you will, of President McKay, we were in a very favored position.

And we probably needed it in the first few years of growth. As the school became established and we were left to ourselves, we established our academic reputation by becoming accredited.”¹⁴



The first Hawai’i-based Church College of Hawai’i Board of Trustees: Edward LaVaun Clissold, Ralph E. Woolley, George Q. Cannon III, N. Arthur Haycock, and Lawrence Haneberg.

At the ground breaking in 1955, President McKay paid specific tribute to Woolley and Clissold: “I wish you people could feel how much you owe to these men and to the other leaders who have dedicated so much of their time and their means to this campus.”¹⁸

missionary George Q. Cannon who, along with Jonathan Napela, had translated the Book of Mormon into Hawaiian in the 1850s. N. Arthur Haycock was president of the Hawai'i Mission, and Lawrence Haneberg was later a counselor in the Honolulu Stake presidency.



The Lanihuli House, the LDS mission home built in 1894, served as a women's dorm until 1959 when new dorms were built.

In June 1957, the First Presidency replaced the continuing Committee with the Pacific Board of Education. This streamlined group consisted of Wendell B. Mendenhall, chair, who added these responsibilities to his already full-time job as head of the Church Building Department; Clissold; Ermel J. Morton, former president of the Tongan Mission; and, as executive secretary, Owen J. Cook, who would become the school's third president.

The Name

At its first meeting, November 23, 1954, the continuing committee accepted the name proposed by the First Presidency: *The Church College of Hawai'i*. Some had suggested *David O. McKay College*, but McKay told Law that "This is 'The Church' and the college should be named the 'Church College.'"¹⁹

In 2003, Raymond Beckham, a long-time faculty member at BYU in Provo, recalled that Wilkinson appointed him and others to consider a new name because "college" in Dominion countries like New Zealand and Canada meant the equivalent of the American "high school," while "Church" communicated to others that CCH was primarily a religious seminary.

Whatever proposals the committee made were apparently shelved, since Zola Ash said she had never heard of such a move. "Dad didn't even consider other names," she said, "because that is the name that President McKay selected, and Dad adored President McKay."²⁰

The Location

Although in retrospect the college's location seemed obvious in the light of the fact that President McKay had his 1921 vision in La'ie, in fact, five different committees had been considering junior college sites since the end of World War II.²¹

The sixth committee, headed by Law, studied the population patterns on Oahu, and proposed that the college be built at Kaneohe, halfway between rural La'ie and urban Honolulu, on the windward side of the Ko'olau mountain range. Law's site location

committee included Kenneth S. Bennion of the LDS Business College and Clarence Cottam, dean of BYU's College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences.

Law took this recommendation back to President McKay in Salt Lake City for McKay's response. "He thanked me for it," remembered Law, "and thought our committee had done a fine job of that survey." Then President McKay announced with a definitiveness that left no room for questions: "The college is really to be at La'ie and I know that's where the Lord wants it and that's where it's going to be." For Law, "that settled that. There couldn't be any question about that."²²

Why had President McKay not given Law the location as part of his instructions, perhaps saving precious time? Law didn't know. Perhaps "he may have just assumed that because the vision came in La'ie we ought to know that that's where it was to be." Clissold, president of the Oahu Stake, hadn't hesitated to "indicate that he wanted it to be in La'ie...but he was a good sport about taking us to all other locations."²³



Seven surplus Army barracks were purchased by Clissold from nearby Wheeler Air Force base to temporarily house the new Church College of Hawai'i.

(The photo above also includes the La'ie Chapel, seen on the left.)

At one time Clissold was serving simultaneously as first counselor in the Oahu Stake presidency, as president of the Hawai'i Temple, and as president of the Japanese Mission.



He was chairman of the board of trustees of the Church College of Hawai'i, a director of the Polynesian Cultural Center, and manager of Zion's Securities Corporation which since 1923 had managed all taxable and non-ecclesiastical property. As a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy in both European and Pacific theaters, Clissold also served in military government relations on General Douglas MacArthur's staff during the occupation of Japan.

The Temporary Campus and the Labor Missionaries

Once the location of the college was determined, Law's major task was to get facilities ready for the students to start classes in September, 1955. Here Clissold was invaluable.²⁴

In addition to his business connections, he was also active in professional, community, and government affairs. He had come to Hawai'i as a missionary, quickly learned to speak Hawaiian, and, after returning to his home in Salt Lake City, brought his wife, Irene, back to Honolulu with him.



Construction of the new campus began 1 September 1955, a full month before the school opened on 26 September 1955.

During the next four and a half decades he served as president of virtually every Church entity in Hawai'i, including the Oahu Stake, the Hawai'i Temple (three times), the Japanese Mission (both in Hawai'i and Japan), the Hawai'i Mission, and Oahu Stake Mission.

In April 1955, Clissold purchased seven surplus barracks from Wheeler Air Force Base near Honolulu, had them moved to La'ie (at one time at least thirty-six sections were on the two-lane highway simultaneously), and positioned them near an existing LDS chapel close to the temple.

Remodeled and refurbished, these temporary buildings provided classrooms, office space, and an assembly hall for devotionals while the permanent campus was being built on a 106-acre site, according to the specifications of a master plan approved by the First Presidency in May 1954. Asphalt walkways and lawns connected the refurbished buildings to the lot where the La'ie North Stake Center is now located.

Women were housed in two dormitories near the temporary classrooms. One was a converted church office building. The other was Lanihuli House, the missionary home built in 1894 when La'ie was the headquarters for the LDS Church in Hawai'i. It served women students until 1959 when new dorms were built. Male students were housed in army surplus buildings at Kakela, halfway between the La'ie and Hau'ula communities.

Following an assembly in the La'ie Ward chapel, The Church College of Hawai'i officially opened for 153 students on September 26, 1955. Construction of the permanent campus had begun almost a full month earlier, on September 1. Initial plans called for construction of 14 buildings covering 174,000 square feet at an estimated cost of \$2.3 million.²⁵

Key to the construction were construction missionaries, a group of volunteers who helped build the permanent campus, faculty housing, and the Polynesian Cultural Center. The battalion consisted of approximately 100 single men and another 105 married men, only 44 of whom were accompanied by their wives. They came from Hawai'i, Tonga, Samoa, and New Zealand.

Their supervisors were experienced contractors from Utah, California, Idaho, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, and Wyoming, who came to the Pacific with their families and lived in houses built by other labor missionaries. Most of the labor missionaries lived in dormitory-style buildings in Hau'ula during the construction of the campus (1955-58) and in the Kakela dorms while they built the Polynesian Cultural Center (1959-63).

This combination of skilled contractors as supervisors and volunteer laborers who worked for their room and board was the innovation of Wendell B. Mendenhall, whom President McKay had called to head the Church Building Program in 1955.

Although such an arrangement was fraught with all of the normal difficulties of cross-cultural communication, the problems of using essentially American-style plans and procedures in Hawai'i, and working under a range of new climates and circumstances, this innovative program also contributed significantly to the construction of chapels and schools through the Pacific, South America,



William Aniu, crane driver (pictured above)—one of the many labor missionaries who, during the 1950s and '60's, helped build the Church College of Hawai'i.



Tongan labor missionaries who worked on the CCH campus during the 1950s pose in front of the McKay Foyer.

Key to the construction were construction missionaries, a group of volunteers who helped build the permanent campus, faculty housing, and the Polynesian Cultural Center. The battalion consisted of approximately 100 single men and another 105 married men, only 44 of whom were accompanied by their wives. They came from Hawai'i, Tonga, Samoa, and New Zealand.

North America, and Europe, as well as for the New Zealand Temple. More than 2,000 buildings were completed before the program was phased out in the 1970s.²⁶

Alice C. Pack, who accompanied her husband on a building mission in 1962, later worked with Virginia D. Nielsen, Louise G. Robinson, Ronald Swickard, and journalism adviser Ralph Barney to create a 168-page yearbook, *The Building Missionaries in Hawai'i*.²⁷ She also nursed the other missionary families, and continued her education, graduating as a valedictorian, *summa cum laude*, with an interdisciplinary degree.

In 1967 she obtained her master's degree at the University of Hawai'i and a doctorate from Walden University. She taught in BYU-Hawai'i's English Learning Institute where she pioneered many parts of that successful program.²⁸

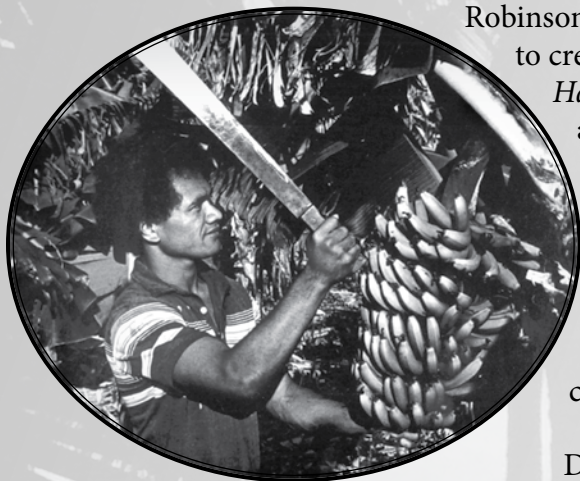
David W. Cummings, a former newspaper reporter and advertising writer, was called out of retirement to serve as publicity director for the Polynesian Cultural Center. His book on the labor missionaries contains a thirty-seven-page "Honor Roll" listing the names of approximately 1,500 labor missionaries who served worldwide.²⁹

Curriculum

As the pattern of faculty recruitment made plain and as Law explained in early press reports, the faculty would teach "the liberal arts and vocational courses."³⁰

In December 1954, the continuing Committee approved an ambitious curriculum and organizational structure for the new school: 115 courses in nine divisions: agriculture and technology, art and music, biological and physical sciences, business, education, home living, language arts, religion, and social sciences. About 11 percent of the courses were vocational.

A memo from Owen J. Cook, executive secretary of the Pacific Board of Education, during a campus visit November 11-14, 1957, provides a glimpse of developments during the school's third academic year. Among the twenty-three items, the Board discussed with Law, faculty, and other administrators, were four vocational educational topics including how to make better use of the portion of the Church-owned La'ie Plantation being considered as a college farm.



I believe that there is great possibility in the farm, not only in the teaching of agriculture, but also in the provision of jobs for the students who need the work in order to attend college.

Reuben D. Law, regarding the Church-owned La'ie Plantation farm.

Law recorded three decisions as a result of that visit: the farm should pay its own way, the college should acquire “clear title” to the property, and the college president hold “responsibility for the operation of the program.” He added hopefully: “I believe that there is great possibility in the farm, not only in the teaching of agriculture, but also in the provision of jobs for the students who need the work in order to attend college. I believe that money earned by the farm could well be considered towards scholarships or grants-in-aid for students who desire to attend college.”³¹

Faculty member Pat Dalton became the farm’s first manager; but when he left temporarily to work on an advanced degree, it languished and, in 1963, the PCC replaced it as a fund raiser and source of student financial assistance.

In the 1970’s, President Stephen Brower revived the idea when the Kahuku Plantation adjacent to La’ie announced plans to shut down with some of its Church-owned property reverting to the Church. However, nothing came of this plan; and in 2005, the farm was still operating under private ownership.

Despite Law’s background in education, he did not see the college primarily as either a vocational school or teacher training institution, even though CCH began offering a four-year education major in 1959 at the suggestion of the accreditation team and a fifth-year professional diploma in 1962 to meet Hawai’i’s Department of Education standards for certification.

Law viewed the college as “a liberal arts institution with a very strong offering in teacher education. Of course, [including] a strong department of religion in which practically all the faculty members participate.”³²

Although not technically part of the curriculum, one of the major academic achievements evolving from Law’s administration was the creation of the Polynesian Institute organized in 1959. This institute, under the direction of faculty member Jerry K. Loveland, was instrumental in the design and development of the Polynesian Cultural Center’s cultural villages, anthropological and historical information, and the procurement and display of material culture artifacts for use in the center.

Architectural styles of the PCC’s Polynesian houses were researched by the institute staff, and the institute promoted and assisted in the production of the first Polynesian shows performed in Honolulu by the university’s Pacific students.



Under the direction of faculty member, Jerry K. Loveland, the Polynesian Institute (forerunner of the Polynesian Cultural Center) was organized in 1959, and was one of the Law administration’s major academic achievements.

Loveland described the Polynesian Institute in terms that were typical of his home state of Idaho, rather than of Hawai'i. He saw it as "a little snowball, rolling downhill and picking up more snow until it reached the bottom of the hill as a good-sized snowball. It's like I've initiated the little snowballs," Loveland recalled in a 1991 interview, "I can take some pride, some gratification."³³



Honolulu newspapers reported the arrival of the faculty and their families on the *Lurline*, one of the major U.S. ocean liners.

College representatives met them on the dock then drove them to La'ie over the narrow two-lane road through the Pali tunnel, a one-hour trip.

The First Faculty

Soon after the announcement in July 1954 that the Church would build a college in Hawai'i, Law began recruiting faculty through his office as Dean of the BYU College of Education, through word of mouth, and through advertisements, primarily in the *Church News*. At the first meetings of the Continuing Committee of The Church College of Hawai'i held in Honolulu in November 1954 Law announced that Ethel Healani Whitford, later CCH registrar and director of admissions, was "the first selected member of the faculty to give verbal assent to possible employment at The Church College of Hawai'i."

Law said he had come to recognize the worth of "this fine young Polynesian woman" when Whitford served as an assistant to the Office of Registrar at Brigham Young University.³⁴ At the same meeting, Law announced the college's name and the appointment of Harold W. Burton and his son, Douglas Burton, as architects for the campus's permanent buildings.

The committee agreed that salaries would be at least 15 (perhaps 20) percent above those at BYU in Provo because of higher living costs in Hawai'i and that the college would pay the minimum fare to Hawai'i for teachers and their families, but not shipping and freight.³⁵

The faculty who signed on to teach at the yet-to-be-built school were primarily young. The only teacher who already had ties to Hawai'i was Joseph H. Spurrier, a former Hawai'i missionary who had married a Hawai'i woman. He was teaching on Maui when Law signed him to teach vocal and instrumental music.³⁶

Honolulu newspapers reported the arrival of the faculty and their families on the *Lurline*, one of the major U.S. ocean liners. College representatives met them on the dock then drove them to La'ie over the narrow two-lane road through the Pali tunnel, a one-hour trip. By September 1955, the original faculty posed for a photograph after a social in Reuben and Leda Law's home.

Kenneth Slack and his pregnant wife, Dorothea Rasmuson Slack, sailed on the *Lurline* with the Law family. Also on board were Apostle Marion G. Romney and his wife, Ida. On August 31, 1955, three weeks after arriving, Dorothea gave birth to a daughter at Kahuku Hospital, then a very primitive frame building.

Later, many faculty wives refused to deliver at Kahuku, preferring the drive to more modern facilities in Kaneohe or Honolulu. Amelia Andersen recalled giving birth in the back seat of their car while Kay, the first academic dean (1960-66),³⁹ was rushing her to a hospital. In addition to the choice to have their baby on Hawaiian soil, the Slacks also signaled their commitment to the islands by naming her *Kananiolaiekapuamuakakulanui*, (*Kanani* for short) which means “The beauty of La’ie, the first flower of the college.”⁴⁰

Oral histories indicate that most faculty and staff were startled at their initial living conditions. There was little housing. The nearest grocery store was ten miles away, and so was the nearest café. However, drawing on their Mormon heritage, that first group of faculty and staff described those first years, not as primitive, but as pioneering. They had the sense of being on an educational frontier.



Glen Auna (*pictured above*) was the first student to formally apply to attend the Church College of Hawai’i.



The first Church College of Hawai’i faculty included: Genevieve W. Bowman, Patrick D. Dalton, Woodruff J. Deem, Nephi Georgi, James B. Hill, Dr. Billie Hollingshead, 38 Ernest C. Jeppsen, Dr. Reuben D. Law, Jerry K. Loveland, Dr. Glen Moore, Elizabeth W. Price, Kenneth T. Slack, Joseph Raymond Smith, Joseph H. Spurrier, Lois Ensign Swapp, Wylie W. Swapp, Ethel Healani Whitford,³⁸ Hughie J. Woodford, Richard T Wootton, and Everett William Young.

Loveland said that he and Delores “were caught up with the opportunities. We had a sense of pioneering, a sense of being in on the ground floor, of something that we could see was big and useful and important. To be part of that was a real thrill.”⁴¹

Unlike the student body of 2004-05, which included students from seventy countries, the institution’s first students came almost entirely from the Hawaiian Islands with a few from Utah and California. Faculty and Church leaders throughout Hawai’i wrote letters, spoke at Church meetings, and conversed with prospective students, persuading them to enroll at the college.

Local media did not overlook the future possibilities of the new school; and another strong influence was the beauty of the CCH choir, which performed under Spurrier’s direction in LDS sacrament meetings and high school concerts throughout the islands.

Richard Wootton, Law’s successor, who helped Law in public relations, ruefully depicted the challenges: “Imagine trying to influence students to come to a school with no tradition, no reputation and no accreditation.”⁴² Nevertheless, by 1958, the college had attracted students from Great Britain, Fiji, Taiwan, Japan, Hawai’i, and the U.S. mainland. By 1959, the student body had climbed to 266.

During the college’s third year, the first student directly from Japan arrived on campus in December 1957. She was Akiko Miya, who was sponsored by George and Ruth Nakanishi, one of the local families who, sight unseen, helped students fulfill immigration requirements. Akiko later became a teaching assistant for Japanese language classes.⁴³

Enrolling at the same time was Pitone Ioane, the first Samoan graduate from Pesega High School in Western Samoa, and Tupou Pulu who had just graduated from Liahona High School in Tonga. Richard Chiu, the first Chinese student, came from Taiwan.

Owen Cook said the international mix was significant in setting the academic pace. “We knew what [the mainland students] should be doing”—information that would have been missing if the curriculum tried to use the many school systems of Polynesia as a base. “The [Asian] students [also] helped to pace the college” because of the generally strong academic programs in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.⁴⁴



Richard Chiu, from Taiwan, (pictured above) was the first Chinese student to enroll at Church College of Hawai’i.

Local LDS youth were the primary recruitment targets. In the spring of 1957, Ishmael Stagner, a seventeen-year-old part-Hawaiian senior at Kamehameha School, gave a youth talk at the Oahu Stake conference. Law introduced himself and invited Stagner to matriculate at CCH. Stagner, who was considering Columbia or Colgate, was lukewarm.

“It’s a good idea for local people to get off this rock and attend mainland schools,” he said. But Law’s dignity and persuasiveness appealed to him. Perhaps the newness of the adventure and the exotic touch of classes in Quonset huts in the pineapple fields also piqued his interest.

He was also impressed when he found that Marilyn Haycock, daughter of D. Arthur Haycock, president of the Hawai’i Mission, would be attending; and he received a personal challenge from Gail and Laura Lee Pratt, daughters of Stagner’s bishop, Alma Pratt, who also enrolled at the La’ie school.

Stagner and Allan Barcase later joined Wylie Swapp’s performance troupe as male *hula* dancers, to entertain in Waikiki, an activity that developed into the Polynesian Cultural Center. It is



Ishmael Stagner (pictured above on the right) performed as a male *hula* dancer, as part of Wylie Swapp’s CCH troupe that performed in Waikiki.



Members of the CCH pep squad: Ishmael Stagner, bottom center and Allan Barcase, along with Nani Battad, Hellene Meyers, Lillian Oshima, and Jackie Tashiro

Ishmael Stagner enrolled at CCH in the fall of 1957, was elected president of the freshman class, and served as student body president twice (1958-59, 1969-61). He also wrote for the Ke Alaka’i (*The Leader*) student newspaper, was an associate editor of the Na Hoa Pono yearbook, and was a member of the pep squad with Allan Barcase, Nani Battad, Helene Meyers, Lillian Oshima, and Jackie Tashiro

doubtful if an Ivy League school could have offered a single student such a broad range of experiences.

Howard K. Lua, who grew up in Samoa and La'ie, was fifteen when CCH opened its doors. He recalled:



“It was always our desire to go to BYU, go to Ricks College, or other colleges that were run by the Church; we always worked and planned for that day. But being of a poor family, you know, we knew it was just a dream, that we would never be able to find the money to go far away to school.”

He was the first generation who did not have to regretfully abandon that dream: *“When we were told that there would be a school here in Hawai’i, it was like a dream come true for most of us ... a school that we could afford, some place to go and learn more and advance ourselves.”*⁴⁵

The first ten students to graduate from CCH, June 1, 1956.

Prophecies have been made regarding its destiny,” he testified. “There are evidences, many evidences of the great future of The Church College of Hawai’i.

Reuben D. Law, at the 1958 dedication of the CCH campus.

Although the school was established primarily to further the education of young Latter-day Saints, twenty non-Mormons enrolled in that first class of 153. Thirteen were baptized before the year was out.⁴⁶ Law’s hospitality toward non-member students also had a practical component: “If they [the school] had not taken in so many non-members, the college could not have developed as fast as it did.”

The first ten students, all of whom had entered as transfer students, graduated on June 1, 1956. Samuel Kekauoha had attended BYU at Provo, served a mission, and returned to find Church educational opportunities in Hawai’i. According to Ethel Whitford Almadova, she and Law were startled to have graduation exercises climax their first year. The second commencement, June 1, 1957, launched fifty-five graduates, with sixty-eight following at the third commencement, June 6, 1958.

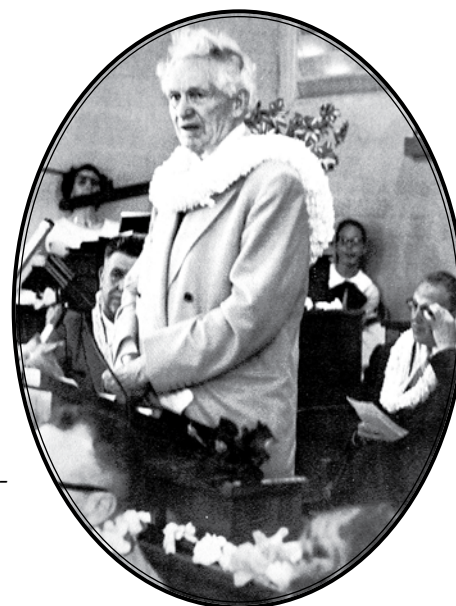
Dedication of the New Campus by President McKay

An indubitable highlight of Law’s administration came when President David O. McKay returned to dedicate The Church College of Hawai’i on December 17, 1958, in the college auditorium. In attendance were major government leaders including Governor William F. Quinn, Honolulu’s mayor Neal S. Blaisdell, Deal F. Crooker, deputy superintendent of Territorial Schools, and Dr. Laurence Snyder, president of the University of Hawai’i.

Quinn expressed appreciation for the new college: “In these days, more perhaps than any time in history past, the relationship between spiritual, temporal and classroom is vitally necessary for the maintenance of the moral and social as well as the cultural values of our Christian civilization.”⁴⁷

Snyder called attention to the swelling ranks of young people demanding higher education and affirmed his conviction that the LDS school would perpetuate an “atmosphere of high spiritual purpose.”

Generously, he continued: “It is the spirit of man that releases his creative and imaginative energies that heighten his aspirations that impel him forward even in the face of adversity. The Church College of Hawai’i knows the value of these qualities, knows how to cherish, foster and cultivate them. It is because of this that we particularly welcome its faculty members to the fellowship of higher education, and in so doing, we extend to them our best wishes for the success that we are confident will be theirs.”⁴⁸



Change for President Law

Law was present at the dedication of the permanent campus and, with a grateful heart, heard President McKay congratulate him on the spirit of the campus and exclaim, “What hath God wrought!” However, Law was no longer the college’s president.

On March 15, 1958, Law informed his faculty that he was going on leave and that the Pacific Board of Education, on his recommendation, was appointing Richard T. Wootton as Acting Administrator.⁴⁹ Law had worked well during the start-up phases with his Continuing Committee/Pacific Board of Education. They were familiar with Hawai’i and committed to the idea of a college; but they were businessmen, community, and ecclesiastical leaders. Although they were supportive and optimistic, their world view differed from “the mind set of the academic world.

Board members are often strong-minded and opinionated; and they sometimes reach further into educational matters than is appropriate.⁵⁰ This local board of trustees was an advantage but also, eventually, a handicap to Law’s efforts to move rapidly.

The Board invited Law to take a year’s leave and explore opportunities, and accepting the Board’s suggestion, Law and his family moved to Los Angeles. He was teaching at the University of Southern California when President McKay kindly invited him to speak at the CCH dedicatory services.

President David O. McKay (pictured above speaking at the dedication) dedicated The Church College of Hawai’i December 17, 1958, in the college auditorium.

Reuben D. Law spoke at the dedication, but he was no longer president, having been replaced by Richard T. Wootton.

In June 1959, President McKay again intervened, notifying Law, BYU's administration, and the Pacific Board of Education, that Law would become a professor of education at BYU on the close of his sabbatical, August 31, 1959. In a meeting with McKay on June 16, 1959, Law received "cherished commendation" and an oral release from his position as president.⁵¹

In his remarks at the 1958 dedication of the new campus, Law said that if the campus had been overbuilt (which he did not believe), it was because of the school's future. "Prophecies have been made regarding its destiny," he testified. "There are evidences, many evidences of the great future of The Church College of Hawai'i." Law reminded the audience of President McKay's 1921 vision, commenting, "The buildings were, of course, created spiritually before they were created physically and much went after that."⁵²

In addition to overseeing the building of the campus, recruiting the faculty, outlining an impressive curriculum, and welcoming the first student body, Law's campus also featured an impressive range of student activities (dances, devotionals, student government, a newspaper and yearbook). It enabled the second president to see a doubled student body, the first four-year offerings, and accreditation.



I think if Reuben Law were to hear me make this comment he would probably say I'm lying. But I've made it before and I'll make it again. I think if it hadn't been for the experiences of Brother Law in higher education and his steady hand and sometimes rather heavy hand, I don't know that this college would have come through some rather trying times in the beginning.

The faculty was essentially green—not that we hadn't taught before, but when you stop to think of being thrown together here within a couple of months' time to form a faculty that's supposed to set up a new institution and do it without any long-range planning, but do it within a couple of months' time. I think we got here in August. We started our school in September and that was when our planning started, when we got here. In fact, we weren't even all here yet. So we planned somewhat piecemeal.⁵⁵

--Nephie Georgi, CCH faculty member (pictured above)

Nephi Georgi, one of the first faculty members and administrators, said that “right from the first it was quite obvious that there was very strong divine guidance that was present here even though it looked like a haphazard operation...I think President Law was an instrument, very definitely, that was necessary on this campus.”⁵³

He also acknowledged that Law was “quite strong-handed and this, unfortunately, caused him some problems and also caused him to misinterpret some of the faculty.”⁵⁴ Such personality clashes led to sometimes negative meetings with the faculty. However, Georgi viewed Law’s role as requiring much firmness.

Law saw himself as committed to democratic principles. In a 1981 interview shortly before his death, he commented,

“I really think that my...great emphasis on public relations was the contribution that helped us get going with the college....It brought students, capable students that might not otherwise have [come]....It provided us with an attitude of support for the institution. I think, of course it would be better if the statement came from the faculty but I had long been an advocate of a good deal of democracy in school administration [and] I think a good deal of democracy was in operation in the administration.”⁵⁶

The Law Legacy

Fortunately for historians and others interested in start-up colleges, Law had academic degrees in history and English as well as educational administration. Furthermore, he was a meticulous diarist. Although he explains his motives for writing his history after being publicly charged in a student assembly by Owen Cook “to prepare a history of the early years of the college,”⁵⁷ it seems likely that preserving those crucial first events helped him keep his experience in perspective.

It took an enormous leap of faith and imagination to preside over a school that began without accreditation and had an uncertain identity, even for faithful Mormons. In Jubilee perspective, Law’s greatest achievement was undeniably his sensitivity and fidelity to the prophetic vision that President McKay had carried in his heart for thirty-three years.

Just one month before the third graduation, 2,712 persons crowded into the La’ie chapel for a special assembly honoring McKay who was returning from a tour of building missions throughout the Pacific.

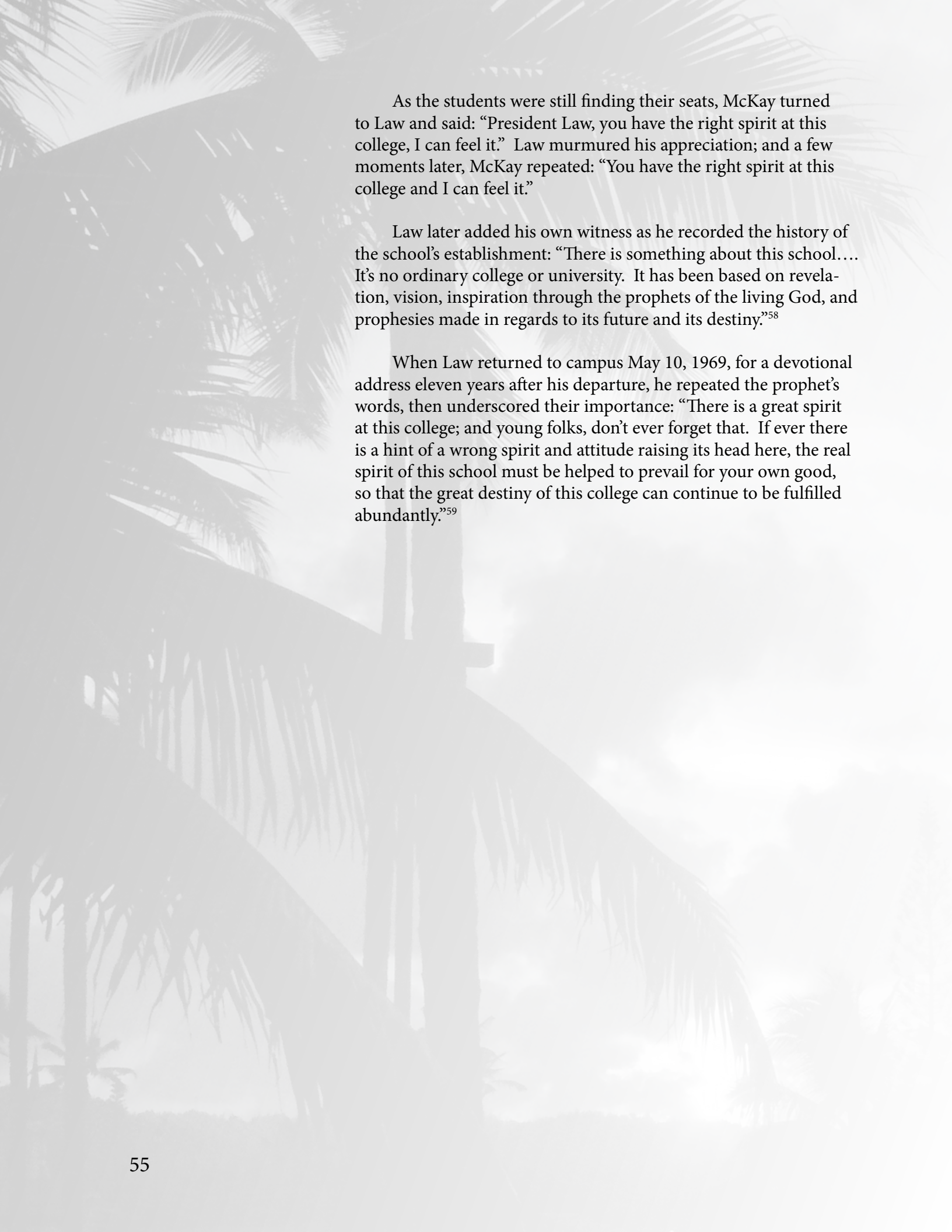
President Law,
you have
the right spirit
at this college,
I can feel it.

Pres. David O. McKay

There is some-
thing about
this school....It’s
no ordinary col-
lege or university.

It has been based
on revelation, vision,
inspiration through
the prophets of the
living God, and
prophesies made in
regards to its future
and its destiny.

Reuben D. Law

The background of the page features a soft, grayscale image of palm trees and the silhouette of a building, possibly a school or church, with a prominent cross on its roof. The scene is set against a bright, hazy sky, creating a serene and spiritual atmosphere.

As the students were still finding their seats, McKay turned to Law and said: “President Law, you have the right spirit at this college, I can feel it.” Law murmured his appreciation; and a few moments later, McKay repeated: “You have the right spirit at this college and I can feel it.”

Law later added his own witness as he recorded the history of the school’s establishment: “There is something about this school.... It’s no ordinary college or university. It has been based on revelation, vision, inspiration through the prophets of the living God, and prophecies made in regards to its future and its destiny.”⁵⁸

When Law returned to campus May 10, 1969, for a devotional address eleven years after his departure, he repeated the prophet’s words, then underscored their importance: “There is a great spirit at this college; and young folks, don’t ever forget that. If ever there is a hint of a wrong spirit and attitude raising its head here, the real spirit of this school must be helped to prevail for your own good, so that the great destiny of this college can continue to be fulfilled abundantly.”⁵⁹



The first Church College of Hawai'i student body.

Endnotes

Chapter One

Note: The name of the school was The Church College of Hawai'i until 1974 when it established a new relationship with Brigham Young University in Provo and its name was changed to Brigham Young University-Hawai'i Campus, now simply Brigham Young University Hawai'i (BYUH).

1 Reuben D. Law, Diary, July 20, 1954, quoted in Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i* (St. George, Utah: Dixie College Press, 1972), 36-37.

2 Ibid., 37.

3 Ralph Olson, "History of The Church College of Hawai'i, 1955-1960" (M.A. thesis, Utah State University, 1961), 17.

4 Ibid., 117-18.

5 Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 331.

6 Ash, Interview, August 2, 2003.

7 Law, Diary, Friday July 9, 1954, quoted in Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church college of Hawai'i*, 33.

8 Ibid.

9 Zola Ash, Letter to Alf Pratte, May 4, 2004.

10 Law, Diary, September 17, 1954, quoted in Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 46.

11 Reuben D. Law, interviewed by Kenneth W. Baldrige, March 7, 1980, typescript, 5-6, Oral History #104, Joseph F. Smith Learning Center, Brigham Young University-Hawai'i, La'ie, Oahu. All oral histories in this collection are hereafter cited by abbreviation and number, e.g., OH-104, 5-6.

12 Ibid., 5.

13 Law, Diary, November 4, 12, 1954, quoted in Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 46; also Zola Ash, interviewed August 2, 2004.

14 Joseph Spurrier, interviewed by Kenneth Baldrige, July 11, 1978, OH-40, 5.

15 Quoted by Law, OH-104, 8.

16 Quoted in Ibid., 9.

17 Ibid., 8.

18 Quoted in Eric B. Shumway, "Educational Foundations of La'ie," PCC Fortieth Anniversary of the Polynesian Cultural Center, October 24, 2003, Shumway Files, BYUH Archives.

19 Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 50.

20 Ash, Interviewed August 2, 2003.

21 Law's diary notes at least five committees involved in the early planning and site selection: (1) A 1949 committee headed by Ralph E. Woolley recommended that a high school be established preferably at La'ie that might be expanded into a junior college. (2) The Fred Lunt committee of 1950 recommended use of the Waialeale

Training School site about fifteen miles from La'ie. Clarence Silver of the Church Building Committee rejected this proposal. (3) A 1951 advisory committee recommended a school for students offering the last two years of high school and first two of junior college in Honolulu with an emphasis on vocational education. (4) Wesley P. Lloyd of BYU recommended in 1952 that a junior college offering primarily vocational courses be established in La'ie. (5) A survey committee headed by Frank McGhie in 1954 recommended a boarding school at Kaneohe as the site for a junior college.

22 Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church college of Hawai'i*, 4-5.

23 Ibid.

24 Edward L. Clissold, Interviewed by Kenneth Baldrige, OH-130, April 5, 1988, iv.

25 According to Law, the costs of the "new Mormon junior college" ranged from \$2 million, reported in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, November 22, 1954, to \$3.5 million reported in the Honolulu Advertiser in December 1958.

26 Steven C. Harper, "Building Missionaries," *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Arnold K. Garr et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 150-51.

27 Alice C. Pack, ed., *Building Missionaries in Hawai'i, 1960-63 (La'ie: Church College of Hawai'i, 1964)*.

28 Alice C. Pack, Interviewed by Kenneth Baldrige, July 1980, OH-123, iii.

29 David W. Cummings, *Mighty Missionary of the Pacific: The Building Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Its History, Scope and Significance* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1961). *Church College of Hawai'i and Its Builders* was published in December 1958 as another tribute to the volunteers.

30 "President Says La'ie College Planned for 500 Students," Honolulu Star-Bulletin, November 23, 1954.

31 Law, *The Founding and Early Development of the Church College of Hawai'i*, 179.

32 Law, OH-104, 8.

33 Jerry K. Loveland, OH-39, 9.

34 Ibid., 2.

35 Ibid. 50.

36 Spurrier completed his Ed.D. at Utah State University in 1962. His love of the islands is reflected in his works, *Great Are The Promises Unto the Isles of the Sea* (1978) and *Sandwich Islands Saints*. (1989)

37 Only two of the original faculty had already received their doctoral degrees. Already a full professor of psychology at BYU, Hollingshead had been awarded both her M.A. (1935) and Ph.D. (1935) degrees from BYU and the University of Southern California respectively. "Dr. Billie," as she was affectionately known, died in 1987. Moore headed the biology division and also advised the

photography club from 1955 to 1958 when he accepted an appointment to the BYU faculty in Provo.

38 Although the Hawai'i-born Whitford was the registrar of the college from 1955 to 1957 she is included in the photo of the twenty members of the first faculty taken outside under a tree. Whitford is also pictured with the first faculty in an outdoor shot before the temporary building. Glenn Moore is not in the latter picture.

39 Amelia Andersen, interviewed by Alf Pratte, July 23, 2004, Provo, Utah.

40 Cormin Slack, email to Alf Pratte, February 2, 2005.

41 Jerry K. Loveland, interviewed by Naomi Udall, July 7, 1978, OH-39, 2.

42 Quoted by Eric B. Shumway, "Being Worthy of Prophetic Promise," Devotional Address, La'ie, January 8, 2004; Shumway files, BYUH Archives.

43 Law, *The founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 182.

44 Owen J. Cook, interviewed by Kenneth W. Baldrige, March 8 and 11, 1980, OH-105, 32.

45 Howard K. Lua, interviewed by Mo`ale Finau, October 19, 1984, OH-227, 2.

46 Law, OH-104, 11.

47 Quoted in Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 249.

48 *Ibid.*, 250.

49 In 1960, Wootton was formally named president of the College.

50 Evelyn Sandberg, in *Following the Vision: Addresses and Statements of the Presidents of CCH/BYUH, 1955-2000*, edited by Greg Gubler, 2:12, unpublished typescript, Joseph F. Smith Archives, Brigham Young University Hawai'i, La'ie.

51 Law, *Diary*, June 15, 16, 1959, quoted in Law, *The Founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 266-67. A letter of appreciation and honorable release followed.

52 *Ibid.*, 240.

53 Nephi and Hedi Georgi, interviewed by Tim Greenwood, March 12, 1979, OH-66, 9.

54 *Ibid.*, OH-66, 9.

55 Georgi, OH-66, 8

56 Law, OH-104, 18

57 Law, *The founding and Early Development of The Church College of Hawai'i*, 6.

58 Law, OH-104, 14.

59 Law, *Selections from Devotional*, May 6, 1969, in Gubler, *Following the Vision*, sec. 2, p. 11.