



## A History of the Friends of Koko Head Potters (the “Hui”)

Koko Head Potters (affectionately called the “Hui”) was started by a group of pottery enthusiasts. Though the Hui has been around for much longer, in 1985, the Friends of Koko Head District Park was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in Honolulu, Hawaii. The articles of incorporation were signed by Francis Mori, Rosalind Ramey, and Mary Marquardt.

The first officers of the Friends of Koko Head District Park were:

- \* Monica Seager, Director of the Studio
- \* Mary Marquardt, Director of Planning
- \* Francis Mori, Director of Finance
- \* Rosalind Ramey, Director of Publicity
- \* Sharon Tanaka, Director of Adjunct Committee

According to the original by-laws, membership was limited to 12 persons for the first year, to be reviewed bi-annually. Each member was required to attend studio time at least once a week and serve on a standing committee. Membership certificates were issued to members in good standing.

Unfortunately, the Hui’s nonprofit corporation status was allowed to lapse, and the Hui operated informally as a Friends group.

In 1989, potter and graphics artist Les Chun designed a beautiful logo with Koko Head, coconut trees, and a sailboat.

Sadly, a lot of the Hui’s written history has been lost. A black book that held the signatures of the founding and early members was inexplicably thrown away.

By 2015, membership in the Hui reached 50-60 members. At the urging of the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation, the Friends of Koko Head District Park became “Koko Head Potters,” a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

In 2023, Hui member Kat Ko refreshed the logo by adding a color gradient.

Today, Koko Head District Park offers classes in pottery wheel, hand-building, family and children’s ceramics, and carving.

Hui members’ reminiscences:

**Dodie Holmes**, a kumu hula who was the Hui’s treasurer for 5 years in the early days, says that the Hui was founded by Mary Marquardt and 7-8 ceramics enthusiasts. Mary was an art teacher at Kamiloiki Elementary School. She studied pottery in Japan and taught wheel-throwing. She is no longer a member of the Hui, but she still stops by every few years.

In the 1980s, Mary and Dodie taught ceramics classes together at Koko Head District Park. Students learned wheel-throwing and glaze-making and helped clean the studio. Dodie laughed as she remembered how Mary would call her on the last day of class, reminding her not to tell the students that

they would be cleaning the studio. Then, 15 minutes before class ended, they would get out the water hoses and lead the students in hosing down the studio. At the end of class, Mary would arrange for a potluck with the students. They were supposed to bring something in a ceramics dish that they made, and she would critique their pottery. Mary would also ask the Hui to help with ceramic art projects at Kamiloiki Elementary School. For one project, Mary's students made clay masks and the Hui raku-fired their pieces.

Dodie recalls that Hui members would get together to go to ceramics exhibits and have weekly potlucks.

**Jill Beaupre** remembers that in the 1990s when she joined, only three types of clay were offered (calico, porcelain, and black or red clay), there were limited glazes, fewer wheels and shelves, and only one set of lockers. Everyone was limited to two bags of clay per session. Mary taught all of the classes. Students used calico clay, because it was easy to use. At the end of class, students helped clean the studio, and the Hui did one cleaning a year. It was a big thing to sign up for a studio job. "And if you didn't, Mary would know!" Jill added with a grin. Friday studio sessions were reserved for Hui members only, as a benefit for making sure the studio ran smoothly.

Jill's sister was the park complex director at the time.

**Nelson Chang** recalls that the first students were mostly Japanese housewives. Their husbands had moved to Hawaii for a job and the women needed something to do. In the early days, the Hui didn't need to fund-raise, and only sold the unclaimed student and member pieces.

**May Muranaka** remembers that when the Hui first started, each new student had to sign the ID number book. They had to put their number on all their pieces for identification. Once a student joined the Hui, only their moniker was necessary. She still remembers hers, number 289 -- she was the 289th student who attended classes. She learned wheel-throwing first from Nelson Chang and then from Mary Marquardt.

**Francis Mori**, one of the first directors of the Hui, says that she took her first ceramics class at Koko Head District Park in the early 1980s. A group of five students got together to form the Hui in 1985. Co-founder Mary Marquardt was "a wonderful human being," Francis said with a smile. "Any piece that came out of the kiln was a beautiful piece." At that time there were only four pottery wheels, and a bag of clay cost \$7. *Note: in 2015, a 25-pound bag of clay costs \$15 for Hui members and \$23 for students, which includes the costs of glazes.* The Hui didn't go to any craft fairs; they raised money at a concession at Koko Marina Shopping Center. Sally, one of the Hui members, was a curator of an art gallery in Chinatown, and would sometimes display their ceramics pieces. There was a lot of extra clay, so Mary Marquardt got a "monstrous" pug mill to recycle the clay. Fran took a hiatus from the Hui to take care of her mother. When she rejoined the Hui, she was amazed to find 10 pottery wheels and many new members.

**Les Chun**, a graphics designer and ceramics instructor, joined the Hui in 1990. At that time, there were about 15 Hui members. Dues were \$40 per year, and ceramics classes were \$15 per session. *Note: in 2015, dues were \$100 per year, and 10-week classes were \$40 for wheel classes, \$30 for carving classes, and \$20 for family classes; children's classes were free.* In addition to raku firings at the studio, the Hui sometimes participated in the annual Raku Ho'olaule'a at Kualoa Beach in the 1990s. On First Fridays, a group of close-knit Hui members would go out to dinner in Chinatown.

*Note: Raku Ho'olaule'a is an annual weekend community Raku ceramics workshop, firing, and camp at a beach-side setting on the island of O'ahu. Registrants organize in firing groups who camp overnight, followed by a juried exhibition of work fired at the beach. On Community Kiln Day, the public can glaze a tea bowl and watch a Hawai'i Craftsman volunteer fire it. Previous Raku Ho'olaule'a have been held in May at Kualoa Beach and Camp Mokule'ia.*

<http://www.hawaiicraftsmen.org/raku-2015>

<http://www.hawaiicraftsmen.org/Resources/Documents/2014.Raku-Catalog-FINAL.pdf>

Reality check: the Hui is different from all the other ceramics studios run by the Honolulu Department of Parks, Les reveals. The Hui is the only studio within the parks that is open when classes are not in session. Les explains: Years ago, the park didn't have knowledgeable staff to run the studio, so the park relied more and more on Hui volunteers to order clay and glazes and run the kilns. Les believes that all the parks should have the same policies, and he's uncomfortable with how the Hui writes its own policies.

**Rita Albina** reveals that her love for pottery started when she lived in Europe and continued when she moved to Hawaii, where she was inspired by the work of Honolulu potter Bob McWilliam. Then she discovered the Hui, learning hand-building from Sandy Martin and wheel-throwing from Les Chun and Jeff Chang. She was ready to do everything – she cleaned, learned to make glazes, helped with teaching, monitored all the time, taught hand-building classes – and loved the Hawaii Kai sunsets! She has wonderful memories of being in the studio with Sandy and Les, both of them earthy and friendly – they would get creative, joke around, and share ideas. “Clay work is so much fun for me and I feel we are fortunate to have the studio we have,” she says.

#### **Honorary Members:**

Mary Marquardt (1999)

Nelson Chang (2013), deceased (1946-2017)

Francis Mori (2018), deceased

#### **Master Potters:**

Les Chun (2014)

Rudy Valera (2014)

Fun Fact: The glaze "Sandy's Mist" was named in honor of Hui member Sandy Martin, who mixed the custom glaze. Before that, it was known as "Mary's Mist."

Fun Fact: The glaze “Forbidden Blue” was a happy accident. Hui member Rita Albina was mixing glazes, and accidentally mixed Castile Blue and Cobalt Blue. Hui members tested the glaze, loved it, and decided to keep it!

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Updated April 2022

**Timeline:**

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1985 | The Friends of Koko Head District Park was formed as a nonprofit corporation in Honolulu, Hawaii.   |
| 1986 |   |
| 1987 |   |
| 1988 |   |
| 1989 | Les Chun designed the Koko Head Potters logo. It was silk-screened on t-shirts. Edie Campbell donated a Cress Electric Kiln.  |
| 1990 |   |
| 1991 |   |
| 1992 |   |
| 1993 |   |
| 1994 |   |
| 1995 |   |
| 1996 |   |
| 1997 |   |
| 1998 | The Christmas Pottery Sale was held.  |
| 1999 | Mary Marquardt was voted as an "Honorary Member." Hui members participated in the Raku Ho'olaule'a at Kualoa.   |
| 2000 |   |
| 2001 |   |
| 2002 |   |
| 2003 |   |
| 2004 |   |
| 2005 | Isumi Tokie of Ceramics Hawaii donated a pugging machine.   |
| 2006 | The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair.  |
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| 2009 | A new kiln was installed. The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair.  |
| 2010 | A slab roller and new (used) wheel were purchased. Wheel carts for glaze buckets were completed. The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. |
| 2012 | The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. A holiday party was held at Gyotaku Japanese Restaurant in Niu Valley.                           |

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| 2013 | Nelson Chang was voted as an "Honorary Member." The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. The holiday party was held at Hui member Natalie Playdon's home in Hawaii Kai.  |
| 2014 | Les Chun and Rudy Valera were voted as "Master Potters." Wheel-throwing teacher and long-time member Les Chun held a glaze-making class. Rudy Valera donated a wheel to the Hui. The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. The holiday party was held at Hui member Natalie Playdon's home in Hawaii Kai. |
| 2015 | Two new wheels were purchased. A "Koko Head Potters" tile mural was installed inside the rolling garage door.  |
| 2016 | The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. The holiday party was held at Hui member Natalie Playdon's home in Hawaii Kai.  |
| 2017 | The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. The holiday party was held at Hui member Natalie Playdon's home in Hawaii Kai.  |
| 2018 | Francis Mori was voted as an "Honorary Member." The annual fundraiser was held at the Diamond Head Arts and Crafts Fair. The holiday party was held at Hui member Natalie Playdon's home in Hawaii Kai.  |
| 2019 |  |
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