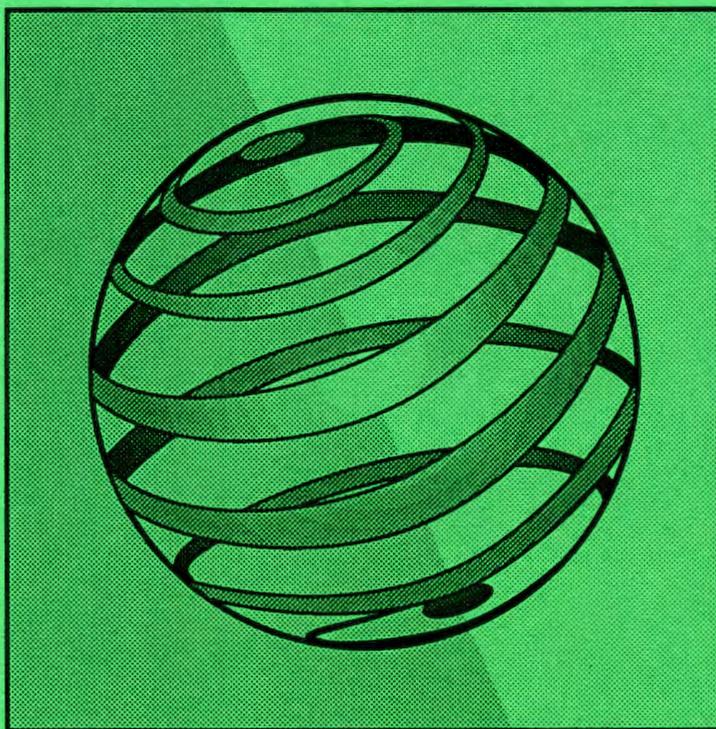


FULL CIRCLE



**A Journal of Essays by Returning Students
Kapi'olani Community College
1993/1994**

Patty Abbruscato
Fermina Abiva
Heavenly Bliss
Anna F. Chang
Jeff Chung
Minori Fujii
Christa Hatch
Mandy Lo

Rob McFatriidge
Ralph Morris
Tu Huu Nguyen
Donna S. Olayan
Josephine Pascual
Uilani Pekelo
Suki Salced
Jeff Wong

Sponsored by the KCC Board of Publications
with support from the CARE Club

Cover:

Jeff Chun, a former contributor to this collection, suggested the title Full Circle which embodies the idea of classroom learning as one starting point in an individual's preparation for life. Coming full circle then symbolizes return to the classroom by those who have left it.

The term 'returning students' refers to students who for various reasons left programs of formal study and who now also for various reasons decide to return. Such students are more commonly known as 'non-traditional students.'

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FULL CIRCLE

Essays by Returning Students

Published by the Board of Student Publications
Kapi'olani Community College
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An Invitation

Aloha *Full Circle* readers! You have in your possession a wonderful publication that is created by our returning adult students at KCC. These students have shared their personal experiences with you; many have written about their "reentry to college" adventures. If you would like to be part of a network of such students, I would like to invite you to be part of CARE, which stands for Club for Adults Returning to Education. We are a campus group interested in issues facing the adult students and are very interested in your input! We usually meet twice-a month during the Monday noon hour. Look for CARE flyers posted on bulletin boards or feel free to see me in Ilima 103 or Jill Makagon in Olona 107 for more information.

Cathy Wehrman
CARE Advisor and Counselor,
Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers Program

Introduction

They return for many reasons—some because they yearn to complete an academic program that the circumstances of their lives forced them to abandon prematurely; others because they hope to qualify for career or study opportunities; still others because a long-held or newfound respect for learning makes staying away impossible. There are other reasons as well.

Whatever the reason, returning students, in two senses of the term, often meet their 'moment of truth' in an English composition class. Here they encounter the assignments which teach and test the mastery of verbal communicative skills on which any successful academic career must be built. They also find the opportunity, even the necessity, to think through and articulate the defining experiences of their lives since nothing is more natural than to use these experiences as the subject material of assigned essays.

Returning students have in common a wealth of personal experience that can and does serve them well as writers. They also, sometimes, confront daunting obstacles. They may doubt their ability, after so long, to reconnect the severed thread of their educational development or despair about meeting responsibilities to jobs and family while taking on a demanding and rigorous program of study.

Not all of them succeed for reasons that can as much relate to the general problems of being a student as to the special problems of being a returning student.

We, the authors and editor of Full Circle, hope that persons who are deciding on a possible return to study at KCC will find these essays to be informative and encouraging but also helpful in realistically assessing the challenges of coming full circle.

Faculty Advisor, Jill Makagon

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The Middle-Aged Student

by Patty Abbruscato

A college education is something that I have dreamed of for a long, long time. Sitting on bar stools telling anyone who would listen how I was going to change the world, and actually turning those dreams into reality are two very, very different things! It has been an adjustment for me in many areas of my life.

Having been a waitress for the past twenty years, I've always had access to plenty of cash. In Waikiki, I averaged around \$500 a week in tips! This has not been the case since I've gone back to school. Now that I am a full-time student, my hours spent working on the job have been cut in half. I still have to pay the rent, as well as the bills, buy food, and all of the other little necessities in life. Also, my tuition has to be paid; books and supplies have to be bought. Pell Grants and tuition waivers are truly a blessing; however, I have learned through experience that this money will be paid back all in good time. Therefore, I find myself having to make certain financial adjustments, which takes some getting used to.

Academically speaking, I find myself having to make other adjustments. Some of my instructors are my age, and I tend to get disgusted with myself when I look at the years that I feel I have wasted. The majority of my classmates are quite a bit younger than me, and yet they seem to be so confident and comfortable. I wonder, were they born smart,

or do they just look that way? (Some, unfortunately, don't even look that way!)

I'm fine that things I learned in high school came back to me in bits and pieces. That's a great feeling, by the way, just to be able to remember that far back. When it comes to homework, I find myself doing a lot of it. Reading, writing, and research may not be unusual for college students; but, it is an adjustment for me. My free time for years was devoted primarily to shopping and watching soap operas. Those days are definitely gone, maybe for good. I take my studies very seriously and know all too well how far a person can get in the world today without a college education. Not very far!

On a social level, I find I have no time for social activities. I'm not certain that I would really want to participate in a lot of school activities. But what does bother me is the fact that I don't have the time to socialize with my friends the way I would really like to. It seems the time I do have with them is clearly defined down to the last minute.

All of these areas of my life are a major adjustment for me now. However, there is definitely more good than bad. That little piece of paper can literally make all the difference in the world! I am all too aware of the realities of not having an education. Working a dead-end job is just that, a dead-end! While making a lot of money at the moment can be very rewarding at the moment—that's all it is—a moment.

And learning really is fun! It's exciting and challenging to learn new things (and remember things we thought were dead and buried), test our brains, and develop new skills. In spite of all the pitfalls, I believe coming back to school is the best thing I could have ever done for myself. My life is definitely different, definitely better!

Believing in Myself

by Fermina Abiva

Students go to college to pursue their careers. As for me, the effects of going back to college were difficult; however, it was a challenge for me. After I graduated from high school in 1985, I enrolled at the Med-Assist School of Hawaii. The following year I was certified as a medical assistant. "I plan to go back to school someday," I told myself. After working for six years as a medical assistant, I decided to come back to school.

In the Fall of 1992, I attended Leeward Community College part-time. Because I was working full-time, I felt exhausted after attending my three night classes. I didn't have a full night's sleep for I had to do my homework. I had to drop two classes.

During registration for Spring 1993, I had to wait in line for two hours at LCC. I waited patiently; however, I was upset. I was upset because I didn't get any classes I wanted. The classes I chose were either closed or canceled. I wanted to be a full-time student at LCC, but I had no luck.

"What shall I do?" I asked myself. "What did I do wrong?" I continued. My thoughts wandered. I thought of quitting school because I was disappointed. I was confused, and I felt miserable. I had the urge to give up school but people like my family, my close friends, and my boss came to the rescue. They knew there was something bothering me. I told them what had happened, and they all advised me to

be strong. "We have faith in you," they stated. "You can do it," they added. Their encouragement gave me strength to feel positive about my life. Because I felt confident, I took the step of applying to KCC for Spring 1993. I was so happy that I was able to get the classes I wanted.

I resigned from my full-time job because I knew it would take time and effort to be a full-time student. Coming to college was a learning experience for me. I felt awkward at first because being a part-time and full-time student was completely different. When I was at LCC as a part-timer, most of my classmates were the same age or older than I. Being a full-time student at KCC made me feel very old. I had classmates much younger than I during my first semester. I felt better during my second semester because my classmates were closer to my age. I met wonderful teachers and made new friends. My dream of returning to school was now a reality.

Returning to college gave me dignity in my life. It took me six years to return, but it seems as though it was only yesterday. I have worked very hard in my life to get where I am now. I am currently a full-time student taking all my prerequisite courses to get into the nursing program.

In conclusion, any person who wants to return to college can do it. As a returning student, you need to think positively. Set goals for yourself. Bad and good times come along the way, to teach us that each day is a learning experience. There are people out there to help you when you are in need. Don't be afraid but take the challenge to fight any obstacles that come your way. Believe in yourself.

Untitled

by Heavenly Bliss

Everyone has a different lifestyle, career, and future. I grew up in an educated family in China. My parents hoped I would be a doctor, but my dream was to become a ballerina or a Chinese Folk Dancer. After kindergarten and elementary school, when I was 12 years old, my dream came true. I started professional training in dance in a dancing school. In my dancing class there were 20 girls from different provinces. For five years it was hard work. I had four hours of training in the morning and three hours of studying music, mathematics, and Chinese literature in the afternoon. I was so tired that when the week ended and the holiday came I only wanted to sleep. Following the first five years of basic training in ballet and Chinese folk dancing, my professional objectives in dancing proved to be easy and enjoyable. I was like an ugly duckling changed into a young swan.

After I graduated from dancing school I performed in several different companies in Beijing. During my 25 year dancing career, I worked hard and I enjoyed it very much. With my dancing companies, I traveled to many cities around the country. I met different classes of people and learned a lot about their customs and histories. It was a great experience to gain knowledge with an open mind.

In the latter part of 1989, I came to Hawaii. I had to learn English in order to live well in the United States. So I had to go back to school to learn how to read, write, and speak

English. Coming to school has been a pleasant experience for me. I studied at the McKinley Adult School for three years. I had good teachers and met many nice classmates. Some are still my friends now. At McKinley School, I was lucky to be a student in Mrs. Penn's class. She is an enthusiastic person and a wonderful teacher. She taught English but also shared her love and patience with the members of the class. Her class was just like a big family and there was a close and friendly atmosphere among the students and teacher. I remember when I was first in her class. I was so scared because I could not understand what she said. It was a difficult time for me, but she always encouraged me with a smiling face. She said, "Don't give up, keep going. Step by step you will climb to the top of the mountains." These encouragements gave me greater confidence in overcoming difficulties.

I have been attending KCC since the fall semester last year. It was a new challenging experience for me because the courses and lessons were much different from adult school. I forced myself to set goals and try to achieve them. Now, I have adapted to KCC and I can study with joy.

When I look back over these four years in school, I have had many bitter-sweet memories, but I am so glad to see and feel the result of my efforts in school.

The Return to College

by Anna F. Chang

A date I will always remember with joy and fulfillment is the day I received my high school diploma—June 5, 1976. For me, that day meant a coming of age, a proud accomplishment, but most importantly, I realized that in a few months I would be a part of the college scene, or as I called it then, the “big league.” I was 18 years old, a perfectionist, and a “Miss Know-it-all.” I considered myself a “hot shot.” My dream of attending college and of becoming a medical doctor would finally begin to come true with my registration at the University. I did not realize, however, or maybe refused to believe at that time, that my primary reason for going to college was not educationally motivated but rather to escape the turmoil of my unhappy home.

Several years prior to my attending college, my father had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. By the time I did enter college, the disease had relentlessly taken my father to a stage of complete helplessness. Having no respite from the constant care given to my father, our family structure had disintegrated—the disease had also taken our family to an emotional state of grief and embitterment. I was imprisoned in a home governed by chaos, fettered by my morals of duty as a daughter to care for a dying parent while wrestling to maintain academic perfection in college. I knew that if I could succeed in my schooling, I would finally be liberated from the poisonous effect of the disease. It was the

unyielding stress, however, that soured my academic achievements; I was forced to face the fact that I could never successfully complete my college studies and thus could never meet the prerequisites for attending medical school. Knowing that I was transgressing my standards of perfection and too proud to seek professional counseling, I prescribed to myself what I thought would exorcise all the anger and frustration undermining my perfect educational plan . . . I quit school.

I had reached a point of mental breakdown and resented that my perfect world had become blemished. My efforts to keep a winning pace with the demands of home life and schoolwork only proved futile. I excused my failing grades with the decision that education was a waste of my time. Since I had lost academically, my thoughts were focused on the surety that I could easily find employment, start earning decent wages, and begin to secure my future. The only part I did not like was that I could not, or subconsciously would not, address what kind of career I would happily secure my future in. Any regretful thought I had about dropping out of college would be immediately discredited; any guilt about my defeat would be assuaged by justifying that I had no choice but to quit school for the good of the family. Being hired to work at a bank gave me some peace of mind and, moreover, my expeditious promotions further legitimized my act of quitting school. The possibility of attaining a successful career without having a college degree became a reality.

There I was, a 22 year old pretentious female beginning my climb on the corporate ladder that would eventually

culminate in my training as a loan officer. I was on top of the world yet still bound to my daily confessionals of, "So what if I am not working in my dream career." It was a confession that would appease the perfectionist demon in me and give credence to my "career over college" vow.

It was my father's passing, however, that rudely awakened me to take a good look at how I had deceived myself into thinking that I was living a most perfect and supposedly happy life. The ordeal of coping with the loss of my father caused me to reflect on the brevity of one's life on earth and ponder the age-old question: "What is the meaning of life?" When preparing for Dad's funeral service, I experienced an enlightening moment. I happened to come across an adage favored by my father, which states, "It takes three things to attain a sense of significant being: / God / A Soul / And a Moment. / And the three are always here. / Just to be is a blessing. / Just to live is holy." When I graduated from high school, my father had presented me with a copy of this proverb and encouraged me to "really think about it and use it like a map."

Being the self-righteous, self-made "smart-ass" person that I was, the only time I devoted to "really thinking about it" was when I had to assist my mother with the funeral arrangements. I had first read this adage at my "coming of age" at 18 and concluded that it was only a simple little religious poem. Six years later, and under different circumstances, those simple little words had broken my stubborn spirit. I finally knew what my life was to be. I realized that "Just to be is a blessing" commanded me to be aware of the sanctity and awesomeness of life. The phrase "Just to live is

Holy” made me think, “Who or what is to stop me from learning how to celebrate the holiness of life, to see the grandeur of the universe?”! When I gave up on continuing my education, I forfeited the right to experience a life rich in knowledge. The perfectionist in me would never say “no” to an opportunity like this! I would not say that what I experienced was akin to a religious awakening, but the impact of events forced me to address my long ago but not forgotten unfinished business—I had to stop pretending my life was just fine. I finally understood that when I abandoned my education, I unknowingly walked away from life and slammed the door on the pulse of life: the arts, sciences, history, people. It was time to take care of that unfinished business—the business of learning.

My newly discovered philosophy of the lifetime privileges a college education offers set forth my determination to return to college and pursue my dream of studying in the field of medicine. Seeing young men and women commuting to the university and community college campuses fueled my hope of one day being able to join them as a college student. So hungry was I to experience life as a college student that my cravings for learning would be temporarily satisfied with my visits to the library to read literary, historical, and medical journals. It had been over ten years since I had flagrantly abandoned my college education, and I longed to reclaim the learning I had thrown away. However, I knew that my brooding, pondering and wishing I could return to college was nothing more than my wallowing in self-pity. I had to get out of my “wishing well” and grab the rope that would allow me to escape the darkness of

my uneducated life. The “rope” was an application for admission to college and all I needed to do to climb out of the darkness to secure my freedom was to fill the application out, sign it, and mail it in.

Though I questioned whether I could survive being reincarnated as a college student at the age of 35, my determination to succeed allayed my fears and insecurities. Furthermore, when I received notice that I had been accepted into the Liberal Arts program at Kapi’olani Community College, I realized I had been given the privilege of having a second chance at education! Returning to college after a 15 year absence has rekindled my love and appreciation for the opportunity to learn. Escaping from problems as a young woman who “thought she knew it all” only proved that it had to take 15 years to understand the meaning of perseverance. I am aware that it may take me more than a decade to complete four years of college work. But I will persevere, for I know that in choosing to learn, I have chosen to live.

Apprehension Unbound

by Jeff Chung

It was terrifying. I was three years old, but twenty-five years later the experience stands out as if it were yesterday. My mother and I walked the airport terminal hoping my sister's plane would arrive soon. I stopped to view a jet taxiing the tarmac and when I reached back for mom's hand it was not there. I was lost. I didn't know where I was, everyone was unfamiliar to me, and I didn't have a clue where to begin to solve my predicament—my fear. The only piece of helpful information I had was my knowledge of where the car was parked. Without stopping to ask for help or to confide in someone who appeared to be a policeman, I ran furiously to the parking stall where the faded white Chrysler sat idle. Within minutes Mom arrived with an entourage of airport security and state policemen. All I can recall from the rest of the incident was that the authorities referred to me as a very smart little boy.

When I decided to go to college two and a half years ago I was consumed by fears I had experienced in the airport twenty five years before. I was entering college since graduating from high school eight years earlier. What most people would face as a new and exciting step I faced with sheer terror. I was again lost in a new and very different airport.

I can't pinpoint exactly when my eyes were opened to what I choose to call—the college experience unbound. Where I once was reluctant to deal with the unknown I now

welcome it as a source of nutrition. The Chrysler I think back to is now my ability to stir excitement among new students, young and old, who face the same fears I once did. Over the past two years I've directed this new excitement by helping other students cope with their new lifestyles here in college. By conducting informal tutorial study groups—for no salary—I have witnessed many apprehensive individuals come out of their shells and become engulfed in the college unbound experience. The process of promising students better grades and a more comfortable feeling of belonging, just by sharing my past fears, is only part of the reward. My genuine sense of leadership represents the final fruits of my labor. All this has led me towards the editorship of a campus publication, participation in the College Bowl Tournament, and membership in Phi Theta Kappa. Fulfilling my term as President of the Alpha Kappa Psi Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa allows me to spread the “college unbound” experience to fellow students who have achieved academic excellence and have taken a step to carry the same torch that I hold so proudly.

The smart little boy used his only piece of knowledge and parleyed it into an abundance of information that he wants so dearly to share with the world. And that is truly outstanding.

Five Years After

by Minori Fujii

“Don’t be so silly! You’ve already gotten a two-year education at college. It’s good enough. Why don’t you think about getting married? There are so many other ways to live, you know? I’ll make an arrangement for you, so get married. You can leave your dreams to your children. Don’t you think it’s one way to live your life?”

My mother said this to me while she was crying. It was the first time in my life I had seen her tears. This happened two years ago when I told my parents that I wanted to study in Hawaii as I asked them for financial support. My father was immediately outraged, and my mother was grieved. They made me feel guilty, and my heart was almost broken.

However, I understood why they objected to my plan at that time; they still possessed the traditional Japanese way of thinking. I was almost 25 years old when I told them of my plan, and I was single. Especially in the countryside, like my home town in Japan, if one’s daughter does not get married in her early twenties, it is said to hurt the family’s prestige because people believe that a good girl marries first. If she does not, her parents are slandered by neighbors, for this means her family did not bring her up in a proper way. Living by such traditional Japanese values, my parents’ anxiety for me had increased. Finally it turned extreme when they recognized that I did not feel a rush to marry. I was twenty-five. I was old enough to get married in order to

make my parents happy.

Being tied up in my parents' traditional way of thinking, coming back to school was not easy for me. Since getting married seemed to be the only way to show my parents my affection for them, I floundered. It took me about one year to make things work out. Even though it was difficult, I wanted to come back to school because I wanted to learn, and there were several reasons why I wanted to do so.

My academic desire, however, did not come out during my school years; I graduated from a two-year girl's college in Tokyo in 1989. When I finished my school years, I felt that I had dropped my burdens. I was tired of studying—cramming for good grades only to please the teachers and my parents. Learning never attracted me, and I was almost delighted to get out of school.

I willingly started working after my graduation; however, something pushed me in a different direction while I was working. Since I worked as an English instructor in the center of a city, I had many opportunities to see a lot of different people and talk to them. Some were farmers from outside the city, some were school teachers, and some were doing their own businesses. I taught them English, yet they taught me a lot more things. I sometimes felt ashamed because I realized that during conversations with them I did not know what I was supposed to know. I often blamed the college which I had attended, saying that I was not given sufficient education there. However, I knew that it was my fault; I did not try to learn.

The second reason why I became enthusiastic about coming back to school was that I was motivated by some of

my experiences in social volunteer activities. I mainly worked for handicapped people, elderly patients in a hospital, and foreign residents to bring them into our society, encouraging friendship between them and residents in our city. Since Japan is a so-called exclusive country, many people who are "different," having handicaps or different nationalities, would have a difficult time adjusting to Japanese society. Until I joined such activities, I had never imagined that segregation was underlying my country and many people were actually suffering from it. The problem was due to the infrastructure of our society and the deep-rooted attitude of Japanese people, based on a history of isolation. However, I felt shameful again; I did not know what a society was like even in my own country until I joined those activities.

Last of all, what induced me to come to school again was traveling and visiting many places in the world. Four years ago when I traveled in Germany by myself, I met an African man on the train and we talked for a while. He said that he came to Germany to work, and he had to send money to his family back home. He amazed me by showing his knowledge about Japan. Even though he had never been there, he knew my country because of his curiosity and his desire to learn. I was embarrassed and frustrated; I could not tell him what I knew about his country or even Africa.

After a while, I reached the point when I realized that my knowledge was very small, and I had wasted my valuable academic years at college since I could not say exactly what it was that I had learned at school. I had a lot of other things that I should have known and I wanted to know. The

shame, which I got when I was working after college graduation, led me to the idea of coming back to school. I wanted to repeat my school years, and I wanted to learn for myself. Life is short. Why can't I do what I want? One of my friends, who is a professor in my hometown, told me, "When you want to learn, it is the time to learn for you." His words confirmed my determination.

Making a truce with my parents, I finally acted on my plan of coming back to school. I chose the United States because I wanted to improve my English. I also wanted to learn about different aspects of my own country from a different point of view. I came to Hawaii because of my interest in the racial and cultural diversities in such a small place. I decided to come to Kapi'olani Community College to study because of my friend's recommendation.

Since I started my college life again, I have noticed that my attachment to the information given in a lecture is obviously different. Although there is a large amount of information that I am required to keep up with and I always have trouble with English, now I have really been learning; in English class, I have learned how to compose paragraphs. In Geography class, I have gotten the information of specific regional problems in the world. In the World History class, I have learned significant issues from each different period of time in different countries. Now I can say, "This is what I have learned at school," and I feel that things I learn become a part of my body.

Without my feeling towards learning, I would never have appreciated my excellent instructors and their lectures. I believe that an appreciative attitude will bring us real value

of learning. This attitude grew, in my case, based on all the experiences I had while I was working. In a sense, I feel thankful to them for giving me such a good opportunity to study here at KCC. I also thank my friend who motivated me to come back to school. I believe that it is never too late to learn something. When we want to do so, this is the time.

Sometime later, when I look back on these school days at KCC, I know that I will still value what I have learned here, and I will never regret what I have done. Because this is my life, I chose my own way to go. I could not simply follow the road my parents had paved for me. However, if I come to think of my parents' sorrow, I feel sorry for them. They might have been defamed by somebody because of my marital status. They may have been disappointed in me, for I have not been a good daughter to them. Nothing could really help us solve our problem, and I knew that none of us was wrong; we happen to have different values of life due to our generation gap, particularly in the countryside of Japan.

It first seemed that there was no way to go around the conflict between my parents and myself. I could not be an obedient daughter and they could not understand why. Yet, one day last month, I saw a gleam of hope break through our barrier; on that day, I received a small parcel from my mother: a few packages of eye drops for me. I opened one of them, wondering why she had sent me such things. She probably recalled my habit: I used to use them whenever my eyes got sore from studying. This was the way she showed me her understanding. I tried to give my eyes one drop, but I could not even open my eyes; they were already filled up with my tears of gratitude.

Why Now?

by Christa Hatch

Third grade was the beginning of the end. Nursery school and kindergarten were a chaotic blur. I shakily wrote my name, and printed my hand in clay. One tiny girl wore glasses. And when anyone was absent, we sang a song about "We miss so-and so." First grade and second grade gave a hint of the future, a vague uncomfortableness. I had an accident in my pants, and no one liked that. When I told my mother of my shameful experience, she laughed.

All that was not great, but not really dreadful. Yet. Because third grade was the start of the dreadful. My teacher had a beehive. That's the hairdo. She also had a very sharp, pointy nose, which wasn't her fault. She pointed out that the date 6-6-66 was coming up, and told us to note that date, and to note 7-7-77, and 8-8-88.

My teacher wanted to have the most disciplined class in the school, and I think that she succeeded. It was awful. It was hell. She folded her arms and we did something-or-other. She flicked the lights and we all did something-else-or-other. Our lines were the straightest. The principal, according to my teacher, was in awe of us. I was in awe.

I managed to go on from there. I went to fourth grade, and by then, I was somehow, suddenly, a bad one. My teacher didn't like me. She gave me a report card that seemed to imply that I was retarded. My father, a university professor, was taken in.

Still, I forged ahead. Through sixth grade, I was such a bad one that I was put into “independent study” and no teacher had to deal with me. Each of us would bring candy every day, which we would share around. We were supposed to do a report about juvenile delinquency. I didn’t know what juvenile delinquency was.

In seventh grade, I was still at it. Really, one has no choice. My French teacher told me to look up “self-respect” in the dictionary. I was supremely humiliated by this suggestion. In eighth grade, I called my art teacher “fatso.”

Still, I persevered and ended up at Harvard—really! There, my teachers didn’t like me any more than they had in grade school, junior high school, high school.

Now I’m thirty-six. And it all started up, this time, in third grade. I visited a third grade class with my daughter, Tiger. All the children liked Tiger. And so did the teacher. And they all liked me! Tiger now belongs in that class. And I now go to college again, this time to learn to be a teacher. And I won’t have a beehive.

Untitled

by Mandy Lo

I want to tell you about my life. I'm a Chinese from Hong Kong. In the old style Chinese family, a girl has no position, especially the oldest daughter. When I was six years old, I learned how to bathe my younger brothers and feed them. Later, I started to go grocery shopping and cook. I stayed home to help my mother until I was eleven years old. Then, my father brought my brothers to live in mainland China so I finally had a chance to go to school. Unfortunately, they came back to Hong Kong after only two and a half years. My father's opinion was that it was unnecessary for a girl to go to school, so I only had two and a half years of schooling.

The oldest girl is her mother's helper so I became my mother's helper again. In the morning time, I prepared the breakfast for my brothers. Our breakfast was usually rice soup which needs more than two hours to cook. Because we used wood to make a fire for cooking, I needed to cleave the big wood as a stick for use every day. Because we didn't have a refrigerator to keep the meat fresh, we had to go shopping every day. My mother and I shared all of those jobs.

I got married in Hawaii last year. This is my third marriage. This husband was also my first husband. We divorced 24 years ago. Then we both had another marriage. After one year, he immigrated to Hawaii with his family and our

daughter. I still lived in Hong Kong. In 1989, my health and marriage both had problems. I had cervical cancer and I couldn't keep my 18 year marriage together. My daughter who lives in Hawaii advised me to leave Hong Kong and emigrate to Hawaii. That is why I am living here now.

In Hong Kong, I had been a housewife. I only stayed home and took care of my family. Since settling in Hawaii, I am not only a housewife, but I am also a shop owner and I am a student. This is a big change for me because I have never had any experience handling a shop, and I haven't gone to school except for those two and a half years when I was eleven. But now I can do all of those things at one time. That feeling was so good. I have found things that I have been missing.

But everything has not been easy. Three years ago, I first came to KCC to learn English. I was very happy because returning to school was my biggest dream. My dream had come true and that made me very happy.

At the beginning of the first semester, I worried about my English level which I thought was too low for school. I also worried that I would not be able to handle the homework. So after class I always stayed in the LAC three to four hours to study. Also, I asked my teacher to record the pronunciation of vocabulary words. Then I went home to repeat and listen to the tape. I always got a good grade for all of my homework and tests. The second semester I got an excellent score and passed ESL 003 and ESL 004. This made me very excited. This meant that if I worked hard, I could keep up with the class and do well. Even if I am an aging woman and even if my English skill was weak, that encouraged me a lot.

Those first two semesters made me feel very excited.

Then I was an English 9V student. On the first day of class in 9V, the teacher spoke very fast. It was hard for me to keep up with her. Fortunately, the teacher was a very kind and patient woman, so by midterm I could follow her. But later I left Hawaii for Hong Kong for a month. When I came back to Hawaii I was behind in my work. The next semester I repeated 9V once again. Until the midterm my scores were good. I thought maybe I would be able to pass 9V or at least I would get two credits. But I failed again. I realized that I had made the wrong decision to run a small sandwich shop. I ran this business so I could have more chances to practice my English. I thought I could take care of my shop and go to school. But both my schoolwork and my business were failing. I found out that I spent too much time on the shop. I didn't have enough time to study and do my homework. I decided to close my shop and concentrate on my school work. I decided to try to do my best. But I had lost my confidence. If I had to write an essay, I spent four to five hours on it. But no matter how long I spent on my papers, I still had a lot of mistakes. Sometimes I didn't know what to do. I found out that my spelling, pronunciation, grammar and all of my English skills were weak. I felt so upset because all of my English teachers were very good teachers, but my English was just not improving.

I couldn't take good care of my family because I spent so much time on my homework. My son told me to give up school. He was worried about my health because I couldn't sleep well worrying about my homework. I began to think that maybe I could not adapt to school because of my age

and my health. But going to school was my dream. When I was a child, I didn't have a chance to go to school because my father thought a girl shouldn't go to school. As a result, I have had only two and a half years of schooling. Going to school has been my whole life's hope. Going to school is the most important thing to me. I still think I can accomplish this dream. For this reason, I have decided to try to continue my schooling.

Hammer Time

by Rob Mc Fatridge

Hammers are very versatile tools. The fact is, they can fix a radio on any construction site. Hit just right, a shot to the top right corner usually will solve any radio idiosyncrasies. I bet you didn't know that; most folks don't. Well, as a carpenter I learned everything you can do with a hammer. Holding onto this knowledge, I've been known to tell a few contractors what they could do with their hammers.

I hope you don't think I'm too negative about this tool of one hundred and one uses. Hammers have their bright spots. Anyone who has felt 32 ounces of tempered steel introduced to bone will testify to the bright spots. When a hammer slams a thumbnail at Mach five, one should notice the blinding white light, possibly attributed to the near death experience that it is. At this point the body decides whether the impact was severe enough to give up the ghost. Unfortunately death seldom occurs fast enough or often enough to suit the hand that just got clobbered. Just a footnote, in this truly religious experience where God's name is bound to be used several times in succession, it pays to know the law.

Murphy's Law chapter two article six subparagraph seven of the M.L.B.O.P.F. (Murphy's Law Book Of Painful Facts), states, and I quote, "Sit down and don't touch anything for one hour following any hammer dancing" (what we in the trades call the characteristic rain dance that always

follows a well-placed blow to the thumb).

The penalty for violating this law is as swift as it is severe. Inevitably another strike is sure to follow. As the head of the hammer slips—and it will—into the well worn groove of the thumb nail hit only moments before, remember me. What comes next is up to your abilities to remain conscious. Realization that time warps, interwoven in the fabric of space and time, have just thrust you screaming into the twilight zone is usually hard cold fact. A curious note to this. Some time travelers, or thrill seekers of this odd way to travel, have made career moves shortly after this trip. Actually, it's not the pain so much as it is the visual effect that seems to drive the blood from the eyeballs.

Oddly enough, it was a moment much like this that helped me decide on my career move. After I finished my rain dance I watched the hammer disappear over the roof into oblivion for the next poor schmuck to find. Slowly I climbed into my truck and cautiously drove home with the emergency flashers on. Lying in bed in the fetal position for a week did the trick; I felt much better. As I lay in bed I firmly decided college was for me.

The thought of going to college was as enticing as Miss January on my calendar. Eventually I made it, starting one day before my 30th birthday. I slipped into class in the middle of January. I hope my calendar girl isn't jealous. The first week was the best. I found that even Algebra is fun. Well, compared to hammer dancing, dental work can be fun. Of course the sight of As on my work has been followed by a new rain dance I do now. So if you see a half-crazed man shouting and jumping around, don't freak. It's probably just me celebrating the best year of my life.

Going Back

by Ralph Morris

The decision to return to school was not an easy one. I spent many hours pondering my various options. Should I stay in the Navy? On the other hand, should I get out and just go to work? Or should I go back to college? Each of these options had its pros and cons.

After six years of service, I knew the ins and outs of the Navy fairly well. They were offering a substantial bonus, shore duty, security, and a decent paycheck, but very long hours and the same type of work for the rest of my career. No, that was out; I was leaving. If when I left the Navy I simply went to work, I would receive a good paycheck and the hours would not be nearly as long. However, I had been a reactor operator for four years and I wanted to do something new and different.

My choice to return to school was not only logical, but it felt right also. I needed to return to school to finish what I had started and to prove that I could achieve the goals that I had set. This decision to return to school was immeasurably different from when I decided to try college right after high school.

I had continued to college after high school not because I had really wanted to but because that is what was expected of me. In high school I had pictured college to be not really work, just a lot of fun and some easy and interesting classes. Life at Penn State came as a big surprise: College meant

work, and the classes were not any more interesting than high school. I really could not believe it; school was not supposed to be work for me! I had made it through high school without studying. I was not going to study in college. A semester and a half later I decided that college was not for me. I felt that I wanted to travel and see the world. Of course, the Navy was the place to do it.

During the six years I was in the Navy, I traveled to many countries and learned many important lessons. I saw the way other people were living and realized how good I had it. In many of the countries that I visited, the people considered it a good day if they had food and a place to sleep for the night. I learned that life meant hard work and only with a college degree could I receive the most for my work. I learned that when you are an adult you are expected to act like one. The most important lesson that I learned was that no one was going to look out for me but me, and anything that I wanted I was going to have to work for.

I walked on to the campus of Kapi'olani Community College ten years older and much wiser than the day I arrived at Penn State. Just when I had made one set of difficult decisions, another set of problems and questions arose. For example, how was I going to relate to the other students who were up to ten years younger than I was? Was I going to be able to balance work and school? It had been a long time since I left school. Was I going to be able to remember enough?

My questions were answered and my anxieties quickly dispelled. The students and professors were extremely easy to relate to and I quickly remembered much of my previous

schooling. Balancing work and school meant sometimes saying no to overtime and taking vacation during finals. However, with the right priorities I made it work. The feeling of rightness when I made the decision to return to school was renewed and increased as the semester progressed.

In many aspects of life, the amount of work that is put into something dictates the benefits gained. I have found this to be true in college. During my time at Penn State I had a very non constructive attitude. I had already decided which classes I was going to work at, and I did very little in my other classes. The close minded, preconceived ideas that I had at Penn State led me to benefit very little from my time there. I was determined to reenter college with an open mind and a productive attitude.

I believe that this is one goal that I have achieved at Kapi'olani Community College. The benefits have been incredible. I have managed to find some interesting aspects to all of my classes, my grades are notably improved, and my knowledge level is increasing at a much faster rate.

I have learned another of life's important lessons: The attitude that you have when beginning something strongly dictates the success of its outcome.

It's Never too Late

by Tu Huu Nguyen

After staying away from school for almost six years, I decided that it was time for me to give it another “shot.” I did it because I wanted to show my family and relatives I could do it, but most importantly, I wanted to prove to myself that I could achieve anything in life if I wanted to, as long as I focused my mind to it.

There are a lot of reasons why I decided to finish school; however, there are only a few compelling reasons why I resolved to pursue this goal. One of the obvious reasons is my eleven-month old daughter, Corrina, who is the love of my life and the treasure of my heart. She means the whole world to me, and because of her, I am more determined and committed to fulfill my goal. Failing her would shatter my self-esteem and poise.

Another reason for my return is the opportunities arising in the East-Asian hemisphere (the economic growth and the potential capital profits involved). Being ambitiously driven and positively motivated as I am, and being exceptionally fluent in the Vietnamese language, it would be an enormous advantage and a great opportunity for me to pursue. In addition, it would be a wonderful opportunity for me to explore a unique and fascinating culture that I had longed to know and love.

I remember back in my high school days when I ditched school almost every day, and I got suspended at least ten

times from four different high schools. I wasn't too keen on school, for it only was a place for me to socialize. I thought school was just a waste of time for me, because I wasn't learning anything, not that I didn't, but I didn't want to. I was only interested in partying, dancing, and the girls. Finally, I decided to drop out of high school and hit the work force. It was great at first, and for a while I made a lot of money, I drove a nice car, went out every weekend and sometimes even on weekdays. I thought I had it made. There wasn't any worry about homework, exams, tests or anything like that.

Then suddenly, it all hit me at once, after the birth of my daughter, Corrina. I realized that I wasn't really getting anywhere with my life. Every day was a routine for me; I got bored with my job. Even though I was making approximately \$30,000 per year, it just wasn't good enough for me, and because of the lack of education that I had, I figured that I wouldn't get too far in this world. I'd been working for the past six years and had nothing saved up. I could imagine what my life would be like for the next ten years. How ironic it may seem, but I had to find a ticket out of here and education was the only way out.

I don't regret putting school "on hold" for so long, for I've gained a multitude of experience, and I have absorbed so much intellectually from the real world, solely by working and living on my own. I've learned to appreciate school a lot more, and I have a desire for an education—because the more a person knows, the more he or she will be prepared to face the world, an attitude that I had never possessed in my earlier and ignorant days. Furthermore, I now realize what I

truly want to achieve in life, and there are no doubts as to what I would like to accomplish out of this world.

The effects of my decision, as I've perceived it, is that it has been the best one I had ever made. For one, it would make the future for my daughter and me brighter and more enterprising. I'm looking forward to meeting a diverse and unique people, and to be astonished by the changing civilizations of Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, or Indonesia that I long to understand and appreciate.

The Investment of the Lifetime

by Donna S. Olayan

“Bah humbug” is what I thought about college. It was not long ago when I felt college would be a burden in my life because school would take time away from my “partying.” Boy, was I wrong. College proved to be everything but a burden in my life. My attitude towards college was partly due to the way my parents raised me. Because I grew up with low self-esteem, I thought I was stupid and felt I would never succeed in anything, especially in school. Henry Ford said, “If you think you can or if you think you can’t, you’re right.” I was right.

During high school I rebelled against my parents. Besides my family problems, I had no other worries about my life. I never gave my future plans much thought because I always figured I would work as a receptionist, get married, and have kids. Because of my rebellion, I would often cut class and not do my homework. To my surprise, I graduated. After graduation, I ended up working as a counter girl in a fast food restaurant.

After working at the fast food restaurant for a couple of years, I started realizing that I didn’t want to make this job a career and be like another Laverne or Judy. Because I didn’t want to work at a restaurant for the rest of my life, my friend and I enrolled in KCC in the Fall of 1987. However, I soon

found myself with the same bad habits of cutting classes and not doing my assignments. I realized I was fooling myself into thinking I was doing it for me. I wasn't. I was doing it to keep my friends and family off my back. I was also doing it to waste my time because I had too much time on my hands now that I was through with high school. Today, I see it as precious time wasted from my life. If only I could turn back the hands of time, I would, but I can't.

Fortunately for me, I was hired to do clerical work in an office. My goal of becoming a receptionist was finally a reality. Little did I know I would grow to hate the profession. Because this is what I thought I would be doing for the rest of my life, I decided to go back to KCC in the Fall of 1990 and further my education in the office curriculum.

Months and years passed by, and I was moving from company to company, when it dawned on me that I didn't want to do office work for the rest of my life. I was in this field because I felt it was the only thing I was capable of doing. I think it was my English teacher who pushed me into rethinking what I wanted to do with my life. Other than my husband, she felt that I was a bright and intelligent person and that I should strive for higher education. I was hesitant at first, but I kept thinking about what she said. I did some soul searching and I decided to listen to her. I made a decision about what I wanted to do in life, but to get where I wanted to get, I would have to pursue my master's degree.

So here I am, pursuing a bachelor's degree. It is the beginning of a new me. I never in my entire life ever thought I would pursue a bachelor's degree, nor did I ever see myself taking any classes above the 100 level. My positive

attitude has changed the outcome of my schooling tremendously. Now that I think I can, I am. I worked my way from English 10 to English 100 with a 3.5 grade average. I am also happy to say that I accomplished my first 4.0 semester this past summer. The feeling of that accomplishment was well worth the struggle.

Another thing that I have learned from school is that there are many instructors out there who are willing to help and inspire their students. The sad part is that the students don't take the time to accept their help and inspiration because instructors are here for the sole purpose of helping a student achieve in education. I have had teachers who have inspired me to strive for the highest mountain, who have encouraged me to start reading again, and who have boosted my confidence in my writing. Instructors are out there waiting, but it's a student's job to seek them out.

A student who does not have a positive attitude about school is better off not going to school. That student will just be wasting time and money. If the student does decide to stay, it will be an important investment in the student's life, so the student must make the most of it by making the investment work—for today, for tomorrow, and for the rest of the student's life.

Dream for a Better Life

by Josephine Pascual

Everyone wants to be successful in life yet there are still unfortunate people left behind with their dreams unfulfilled. Education has always been associated with success and fame. It is a learning process that must be undergone in order to have a better and more stable future. In my own case, there were various reasons why I chose to go back to school. I want to realize my dreams, find a better job, and be a role model to my two kids.

I grew up with a dream of becoming a doctor to be able to help the community in the rural area where I was born. Financial problems had deterred me. Now, I am hoping to get into the Nursing program to pursue the same career I had once started and a profession that I can use to help people. Eventually, I want to be a part of the ALOHA MISSION PROGRAM.

In addition to this, I want to have a better paying job for financial stability. During the past six years that I have worked in different banks, I have always encountered the same problem: It is hard to move up without a college education. I am sure that this is true in any other company or corporation. One must have the diploma to be eligible for further promotion.

Lastly, by going back to school I can be the role model for my two kids. I want them to realize the importance of education at their early age. I hope that through my experi-

ence they will take it as a lesson to concentrate on their studies when they grow up.

It takes a lot of strong determination and will to go back to school and attend classes after years of being out of the system. Since KCC offers a variety of classes and a flexible schedule, hopefully I will be able to attain my dreams in the future.

Climbing the Blue Collar Ladder

by Uilani Pekelo

My parents had high hopes that, as a 1988 graduate from Punahou School, I would immediately enter college, obtain a degree, and secure a job with a stable company. As a young 17 year old, I had ideas completely different from my parents.

Let me take you back to the last few months of my senior year—the stressful time in which thousands of seniors nationwide fill out the lengthy college applications and anxiously await their letters of acceptance or rejection. I was amazed to see so many of my classmates’ dreams and aspirations riding on their number one choice of schools to accept them. I, on the other hand, applied to two mainland colleges (both of which I knew would not accept me) and two local colleges: University of Hawaii-Mānoa, and Chaminade. Upon receiving my rejection letters from the two mainland colleges, I felt absolutely no bitterness or any remote feeling that my life would somehow not be complete. I basically didn’t care. Chaminade accepted me even with my very low grades and below average SAT scores. I decided against attending Chaminade since the tuition was so high. I never did receive any acknowledgment letter of my UH application and I promptly forgot all about having sent it.

I spent my summer with my older sister who was home from college and my younger sister who was still attending high school. I enjoyed this summer, my first not having to take summer school in eight years. I remember this summer vividly, for not only did I have a great time, but I also received a letter in the beginning of August from UH. I didn't know what they were writing to me for, since I had already forgotten about submitting my application. I don't recall exactly what the letter said, but it was something to the effect that I had been accepted to the University, new student registration was in a few days, and school was to start in two weeks. TWO WEEKS!!!!

I really had to scramble and get the Schedule of Courses and decide what classes I wanted to take. After hours of flipping through that wretched catalog, I finally decided on four courses which were to my liking. I even managed to find two alternatives for each of my four classes in the event my first choices were closed.

Well, the big registration day came and I stood in what seemed to be a mile-long line in the baking summer sun. When my turn came I was relieved to be able to stand in an air conditioned room. I handed over my registration sheet to the computer person who would then enter my courses into the computer to secure me a position in the classes. Unfortunately, all four of my first choices were closed as were each of my alternative classes. This led me to shock and disbelief. Now I had to sit with this stranger who was visibly uptight and flip through the catalog and choose classes. As it turned out, I ended up with four classes: Math 100, Sociology 218, 251, and 231. Being a new student at UH-Mānoa, I wasn't too

sure what to expect from these classes, but I was sure that the 200-level classes weren't going to be too easy.

This new learning environment proved to be difficult for me to handle. None of my professors took roll nor did they know our names. We were told to hand in all homework assignments and papers with our number on them, the number they assigned us on the first day of instruction. Can you believe that—not having a name but a number, much like a prisoner in a penitentiary. But this is not what led me to my downfall. I did that all on my own.

Since the professors didn't know who I was and didn't take roll, I was able to have a lot of free time. The majority of this free time was spent sleeping in the corridors or in the lunch room. I would show up for my classes in the event of a midterm or when an assignment was due. These due dates I knew because each professor handed out a syllabus the size of an encyclopedia on the first day of instruction.

As it happened, my first semester at Mānoa was a blast, for me anyway. The lack of authority in the classroom led me down a destructive path and I ended up on academic probation. This probation lasted through the Spring 1989 semester and I began the Fall 1989 semester on probation as well. At the conclusion of the Fall semester, I had posted my best grades ever. However, they were not good enough to get a 2.0 GPA. I was very close to reaching that standardized 2.0, just .2 points shy.

That was my last semester at Mānoa; I was placed on academic suspension for one semester with guaranteed re-admission the next semester provided I refrained from taking any accredited classes from any other institution of

higher education. I felt I had been robbed! I was so close to the C-average. I made an appointment with the assistant dean (the dean was out of town). She explained to me that the LTH system goes strictly by the numbers and they make no exceptions, even for students like me who showed increasing effort as was reflected in my best-ever report card. Dejectedly I left, vowing never to attend UH-Mānoa again.

I had been working at Foodland Market City since December 1988. I began working as the end of my first semester at UH came to a close. My immediate supervisor was very understanding about my school schedule and generously assigned me to twenty-hours per week, working around my classes. Now that I was no longer enrolled in school, I was given forty hours per week with the first opportunity for overtime hours.

I worked in the bakery department. I was responsible for many duties which ranged from waiting on customers, baking, washing dishes, sweeping and mopping, and stocking shelves. With the exception of the first duty, everything else was relatively easy. The only difficult part was getting others to alternate doing the chores with me. I think the hardest part about the customer service was learning how to deal with the customer who can't be pleased.

Working at the counter gave me the opportunity to meet all sorts of people. These people came in all shapes and forms and had different types of attitudes. I met people who were friendly, bashful, brazen, grouchy, uptight, senile. Believe it or not, I actually had to wait on a person who complained that the pastries were too sweet. This person ranted and raved for five minutes and at the end bought a

boxful of pastries! I met some pretty strange birds. But if it weren't for these people, I never would have learned how to communicate on a controlled verbal level with members of society.

Through a lot of patience, hard-work, and tongue-biting, I was finally promoted to manager of the bakery in July 1991. With this new position came more responsibilities, which included ordering products from the vendors, making the weekly schedule for the department employees, assigning job duties, attending manager meetings, store manager meetings, and safety meetings once per quarter. I really enjoyed my job for about eight months. This is when I explored my other options as an employee of Foodland Supermarkets, Ltd.

I knew I didn't ever want to become a store manager so my only other option was to move into the office. You see, once a person reaches the top position in the department, there is no place to go. You're stuck, you can't go anywhere. I did my research into job openings at the main office. The pay for the entry level positions was about as low as the courtesy clerks' pay—roughly \$7 per hour. The good paying jobs, that is, the jobs which paid comparably to my salary, all required a college degree. I was disheartened, to say the least. My only other option besides staying trapped in a rat hole was to get more education.

After mulling the thought over for a number of months, I finally gathered up the courage to fill out an application to Kapi'olani Community College. When I received my acceptance letter, which stated I had to take a placement test, I grudgingly took the Math placement exam. Having

earned only a D in Math 100 at UH, I wasn't too sure what my chances were of placing into a higher level class (I didn't take the English placement test having completed the English 100 honors class at Mānoa). I felt so old and out of place in a room full of young high school students. I chuckled to myself seeing these youngsters laugh and horse around without a care in the world. I was like that just four years ago.

I didn't do too shabbily on the test after all. I placed into Math 25 which proved to be a breeze, as was Math 27 which I took in Summer 1993. My first semester back to school was Spring 1993. I took the basic 100-level courses with the exception of the Math class. I loved KCC! The teachers were friendly and warm. They actually made an effort to learn your name and a little background history about yourself. They even took roll! This is the kind of structured learning environment I needed. I finished my first semester back in college with a 4.0 GPA. I was ecstatic because I had never earned all As on one report card in my whole entire life!!!

Since I wanted to finish my studies as quickly as possible, I signed up for two classes in Summer 1993, Math 27 and Philosophy 100. Both these classes proved to be relatively easy for me, but I had to dedicate many hours to homework just to keep my head above water.

It wasn't until Fall 1993 that I finally decided on my major. I knew that I didn't want to return to UH-Mānoa so I had to explore my other options. As my research confirmed, HPU and Chaminade were very costly, so I opted to look into UH-West O'ahu. This quaint little college is located on the ewa end of Leeward Community College's property. In

fact, they are so close they actually share buildings and classrooms. Some of the teachers instruct at both "campuses." I think West O'ahu College will be the place where I will earn my Sociology degree. I decided on this college because after meeting with the counselor and obtaining the literature, I got a feeling of familiarity. The counselor seemed generally interested in me and proposed several plans of attack at KCC to get myself up to West Oahu in minimal time. So far so good, I'll be entering UH-West O'ahu in Fall 1994 as a junior.

The lessons I've learned through my work experiences at Foodland have proven to be invaluable. Normally an outspoken person, I've learned how to bite my tongue in certain situations through interacting with customers who are never pleased with the best service anyone could possibly give. Oftentimes I question "the customer is always right" phrase because sometimes the customer is blatantly wrong. But good customer service reflects not only on the individual but on the company as well. This is another valuable lesson I learned during my time off from my studies. As an employee, you represent not only yourself but the company you work for as well. You are a representative of the company, much like a PR person. The most important thing I learned is that in order to climb the corporate ladder one needs to earn a college degree. A high school diploma will get you a fair-paying job, but once you've reached the top position in the blue collar field, a college degree is necessary to further your promotions into the white collar position. This conceptualization is what lured me back to college in pursuit of a bachelor's degree. I hope that every young-

ster has similar experiences to mine to better appreciate the system of higher education. Hopefully, earning a college degree and landing a good paying job will make you healthy, wealthy, and wise!

Untitled

by Suki Salced

When I was fifteen, my father and I would watch medical documentaries in which surgeons would do open heart surgery. It always fascinated me how these doctors could slice humans open, work on their heart, sew them up, and the body would heal. I knew back then that I wanted to be in the medical field, especially doing cardiac surgery.

I didn't do well in high school, so I had no ambition to attend college. Instead, I started working full-time making lots of money. In Reno, at the age of 24, I was running cocktails in the Peppermill Casino. One night when I was working, in my tuxedo that showed half of my chest and barely covered my butt, a guy pinched me and said, "Hey babe can I get your number?" At that point I knew I didn't want to be a cocktail waitress the rest of my life. I couldn't picture myself at the age of 50 still in this tiny outfit walking around saying, "Cocktails." I wanted to get out of Reno and go to school, but I didn't have the money, so I joined the United States Navy.

The Navy sounded like a wonderful idea at the time. The Navy has been quite fun: I have met people from all over the world and have seen lots of places I probably would have never seen if I had stayed in Reno. For the past five years of my naval career I have been a dental assistant. For three of the five years, I have worked in surgery. I'm trained in CPR, First Aid, and Casualty Care. Even though I've

accomplished becoming a dental assistant, which is in the medical field, it still isn't where I want to be in my career. People bite you and slobber on your hands; they choke and gag on instruments and at times vomit on the floor. I know in order to achieve my goal working in cardiac surgeries, I need to attend college.

I have chosen a degree in nursing and would like to specialize in cardiac surgery. The reason I'm so interested in cardiac surgery is because when I would watch the open heart surgeries, I would be glued to the TV. Seeing the doctors take a scalpel, make an incision in the chest, and open the chest with rib spreaders to get to the heart is unbelievable. Then, after the doctors gain access into the chest, it's amazing to see the heart pulsate as they work on it. This type of work engrosses me. Because of the experience I've had working in surgery departments for the Navy, I know that I will be good in this field. The sight of blood doesn't bother me and I love being right in the middle of surgery.

It has been very difficult going back to school, especially after being out of high school for eleven years. I hold a full-time job, I'm a volunteer for Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Honolulu, and I take two classes a semester. It is very time consuming, but I know every class I take is just one step closer to my dream of becoming a nurse.

Third Time's a Charm

by Jeff Wong

I sit and ponder one of the most important questions of my life. Why did I return to school after such a long hiatus? First, I must say that I am not a stranger to Kapi'olani Community College. My career at KCC began during the Fall of 1980 when I had a calling, a strong need to become a nurse. Prior to attending KCC, I already had five years' experience being a Para-Medic with the state hospital system. Having the experience but not having a certificate or diploma made obtaining an outside nursing position impossible. I enrolled in the Nurses' Assistant program, graduated, and got my certificate. I will never forget my being the only guy in an otherwise all-female class. It was fantastic; I got attention from all the girls as they made learning fun and easy.

Later I decided that I wanted to further my nursing career in the LPN program. After finishing that course, I got the chance to work at a fabulous hospital; I was so excited working at Straub. Little did I know that within six months on the job, my career would come to an abrupt halt. I injured my back transferring a patient from his wheelchair to his bed. The patient's foot got trapped in the stirrup of the wheelchair, and as I pivoted to get him safely to the bed, my lower back twisted and I wrenched in pain.

The following four years of my life were very frustrating and depressing. I was not allowed to do very much of anything. I was under doctor's orders and a victim of

Worker's Compensation. I went through extensive physical therapy for three years, entering another phase of life, "The Twilight Zone." I went through mental and physical anguish and saw several professionals who tried to teach me to live a new life. So I decided to return to KCC for the second time. I did a lot of soul searching and made a commitment to apply myself to liberal arts. I wanted to focus my interest in writing. I needed to go to school to learn the skill and the art form. My desire to follow that dream came to an end when I learned I could go back to work.

I went to Vocational Rehabilitation, and through that program, I got a job at Alu Like as a Counselor's Assistant. In the Native Hawaiian Affairs office, my job was to assist the counselors by getting job contracts signed for the clients and making job contacts. It was an exciting job and I enjoyed it a lot. After a year and a half, my fellow employees and boss encouraged me to take a position at Hickam Air Force Base as a Third Party Disability Manager. I made a grave mistake; I should have stayed at Alu Like. My career at Hickam came at an unfortunate time. I got caught up in the military's civilian cut back program. The military's jargon of "Last to come, first to leave" meant I had to say goodbye after only six months. It was depressing at first, but I was also relieved as it was a very stressful position.

I went back to Vocational Rehabilitation for additional guidance, and they started me out on a new kind of venture, working with the physically and mentally retarded at Goodwill. I had such titles as Job Developer, Employment Specialist, and Pre-vocational Counselor. I felt on top of the world with an occupation where I could make a difference for

people who needed help. I counseled clients and helped them make their work and home environments pleasant. Because of my success, I was lured away by better pay to another company.

At SECO (Special Education Center of Oahu) being a Teacher/Trainer meant working with the more profoundly physically and mentally retarded. This job made me wish that I had never left Goodwill because I felt that I wasn't helping or making a difference for these people who were like vegetables. Being at SECO made me realize a lot about myself, and I wanted to set my priorities straight. Which was more important, money or happiness? I was happier being paid a little less money at Goodwill.

As I left SECO, I continued teaching the handicapped at ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens). However, after two years as an instructor, I felt I needed a change. I was burned out from taking care of people. I felt tired all the time and despondent. Life was a drag, a total bore. After being out of work for a year and recuperating from a relapse of my back injury, I resigned myself to again ask Vocational Rehabilitation for aid. The decision was made that I return to school. My response to my counselor was, "Me? Go back to school? Hey, You have to be kidding! Hey, I'm old! Forty years old!" My counselor assured me it wouldn't be all that bad.

Why does one return to school after being out for such a long time? This is the question that I kept asking myself over and over again. As I stood in that enormous line to register for my classes, fear dug deep into my gut. I needed reassurance, someone or something to tell me that I was making the right decision. The fear grew and grew the longer I stood in

the line. I was beginning to have a migraine headache and I felt faint, as I began to sweat. Whose decision was this? Why should I go to school? Heck, I'm old! My eyes started to peer through my fright. I finally realized there were real students here who wanted an education. They were of all ages and they had the intestinal fortitude, the desire to learn. So how about me? If I registered for my classes, would I be able to survive the courses?

So I hoped the third time would be a charm. My journey back to school began in the Spring of '93. The students in my classes were young enough to be my kids. What happened to the older students who stood in the line with me? I wondered what these younger students thought about having an old foggy taking up space in their classroom. As I became preoccupied about being out of place, my personal fears got in the way, and I failed. When I enrolled, I began with three courses, but when the semester finished, I only had one course left. I earned three credits, but received a "D," so I wasn't too proud of myself. I repeated that same course during the summer session. I studied every day at the school's library and in the end I turned that "D" into a "B."

Now I am here in the Fall of '93, and I personally think I've come a long way. I've learned one very important lesson: Going back to school shouldn't be an ego trip. Yes, I did find the answer, that you are never too old to return to school. If you have the desire to be here at Kapi'olani Community College, it means you have a goal. So reach up high for the sky, because there may be a pot of gold when you get over the rainbow.

Club for Adults Returning to Education

IF YOU ARE :

- *An enrolled KCC student
- *25 years of age or older
- *A veteran
- *Returning to school after a year or more absence
- *Supporting dependents
- *Married, separated, divorced or widowed

THEN JOIN CARE!

CARE, previously called the Single Parents & Homemakers Club, is a club for adult learners who have returned to school and want to meet and plan activities with others. Students plan activities such as self-help workshops, family field trips, legislative involvement, informal social luncheons, school dances, picnics, fund raisers, and guest speakers on topics ranging from stress management to domestic violence.

CARE's purposes are:

1. to share resources
2. to provide a supportive environment for personal and academic success
3. to create awareness and serve as an outreach to on- and off-campus issues