Good afternoon everyone.

A couple of weeks ago, someone called and said they wanted me to attend a birthday party—which was supposed to be today—and they wanted me to say a few words. I wasn’t paying much attention, but did put it on my calendar.

No one ever called me back with details regarding the birthday party, so that was good because I knew I had this program with you to attend where I did have to say a few words. In the back of my mind, however, I kept on thinking about the birthday party. Was I losing my mind! Was this the early sign of dementia?

But after having heard Jean, Christine, Eric, Darrell, and Wing Tek speak this evening, I got it. Totally got it! This was a birthday party after all—the first birthday of another milestone in Bamboo Ridge’s long list of achievements—this time for the digitization of out-of-print books and rare titles in their repertoire. A few years ago, Wing Tek, in all his seriousness, came up to me and said Bamboo Ridge was no longer going to publish *Hilo Rains* and *Tsunami Years*, so I felt very sad because it was as if my books would disappear, never to be read again. With this digitization of my books, however, they have been resurrected, accessible in perpetuity.

At this time, I wish to thank Eric and Darrell for publishing my books. I will forever be grateful to them for their faith in my work.

Secondly, I’d like to thank both Jean Toyama and Gail Kuroda for the placement of my out-of-print books online. You worked so hard in getting this digitization project on the road. It was such a huge project and a challenging one in getting all the permissions from the various authors, especially from those in many of our anthologies. For a while I worried about these two ladies who were acting more like detectives from HPD these past few months. *Scott Kikkawa*
where are youuuuu? In addition, we at Bamboo Ridge Press are greatly indebted to those here at Kapiolani Community College who worked diligently with Jean and Gail in getting this up and running.

In a short time, this project has already shown its worth. Let me explain. Up until now, whenever I’ve worked with other students and teachers in various schools here in Hawai‘i, I’ve had to go into classrooms, carrying the books and other materials needed for my reading and writing sessions. Schlepping books and my teaching materials back and forth got pretty tiresome after a while, especially as I grew older.

If teachers wanted me to do a class session with their students, and their school happened to be based on the mainland, we usually used Skype to work with each other. This method was also a cumbersome way of teaching students and having discussions. I had to send books or copies of my poems for teachers to distribute, and often Skype was not very reliable, fading in and out, depending on the weather condition or other technical problems.

Recently, a teacher in NY emailed me and asked if I would do something with his high school literature classes, possibly do a reading and q/a via Skype because he had been using some of my poems in class. I told him that I was going to be in NY in March, so I would gladly meet with his students. He first question was, “What about books. How are we going to handle that?” I told him that my poetry books were out of print, but Hilo Rains was online, and he and his students could go there to read the book and think of questions to ask.

I didn’t hear from him for a while, and when I did, he said, some of his students went on line and had connected to the website and got to read many of the poems. They were thrilled, the teacher said. They found the site easy to use and had no problems navigating it.
It will be wonderful for me in working with students and teachers moving forward. I anticipate the students will be so much more prepared due to the stories and poems being accessible on this website that we are celebrating today!

Thank you so much everyone.