

Al Nip and Maui Jam Band release Hawaiian music CD

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LAHAINA - Lahaina News was gifted with a CD from Maui Jam Band, "Kilakila 'O Kahalawai," with Al Nip, Geronimo Valdriz, Lance Tokushima, Kahala Greig, Fulton Tashombe, Jon Toda, Patti Kuwaye and Kelly Covington sharing their talent on the recently released, 11-mix compilation of tunes to razzle-dazzle, spoon and pull the heart strings.

Behind the Hawaiian harmonies, however, a singular story emerges; it's about Al Nip, a man with a love so big for West Maui, it extends into all quarters.

He didn't always live in Lahaina; but once he moved here, he never looked back.

Article Photos



Well-known for performing at Second Friday Town Parties in Lahaina, the Maui Jam Band recently released a new CD called "Kilakila 'O Kahalawai."

"I graduated from Kaimuki High School on the island of Oahu (in 1968) and went on to the University of Hawaii, where I got a degree in Travel Industry Management then went back and got a degree in Education," he said.

His teaching career began in 1975 at Lahainaluna High School, and his service has had an important and memorable impact on our community.

"I can proudly say that I spent my 31-year career in education at Lahainaluna High School. We had an unbelievably good teaching staff while I was at the school, and developed many young minds who are now contributing members of our community and society - most of them still in Hawaii," Nip recalled.

"I was able to implement new business classes at Lahainaluna," Nip continued, "including programs in marketing; computer classes, where we started with one computer in 1981; business law; and an Academy of Hospitality and Tourism in 1992, the first on Maui."

"I started the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) in 1975, and Lahainaluna DECA members qualified for national competition for 20 straight years; it was quite an accomplishment for these students. Today, those students are medical doctors, business owners and managers," Nip observed with pride.

Nip's commitment to the wa'a (canoe) is fundamental to his character.

"In 1996, we started a voyaging program at Lahainaluna High School and ran it with the Academy of Hospitality and Tourism program. With the assistance of my fellow crew members of the Hui o Wa'a Kaulua, the county lifeguards, Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center and the Coon brothers of Trilogy (Excursions), we ran programs for the students, including CPR training, water safety classes, camping trips to Kahakuloa Valley, Kahoolawe, Molokai, Hawaii Island and training on the Mo'olele and Makali'i voyaging canoe."

Michael Moore (Old Lahaina Luau) remembers Nip with deep respect: "I met Al way, way back at the beginning of Hui O Wa'a Kaulua, the canoe project. I believe we were both on the board at that time from all these years in the community and working with so many Lahainaluna kids, Al was a highly respected and compassionate leader."

It's the voyager mindset.

"When I first moved to Maui to teach at Lahainaluna, I was fortunate to meet the Lindsey 'Ohana in Lahaina. Ed 'Brother' and his brother, Charlie Lindsey, were caretakers of the 42-foot interisland sailing canoe along with the designer, Keola Sequeira. I started sailing with them on the Mo'olele. Being on the ocean on the Mo'olele is the most exhilarating

experience; you fall in love with the canoe and all it can do for you personally, as well as all the different people you meet and work with while caring for the canoe," Nip said.

He has ripping through the waves in the Pailolo Channel on the double-hulled craft clearly etched in his memory as priceless.

Our young paddlers have also benefited by the Nip influence.

"Napili Canoe Club has an outstanding keiki coaching staff; I assist in coaching the manini paddlers. I have been there since Nori Tihada became the head coach for the keiki. Nori is unmatched in his coaching style and his work with Lahaina keiki, along with the other coaches: Manny Portabes, Eugene Tihada, Colin Delos Reyes, Kona Maielua, Rae Kama, Isaiah Makaiwi and Kalani Tihada. Not sure how many years, but some of the manini that I have coached, starting at age eight, have already graduated from high school," he said.

Nip has dirt under his nails as well, with a family farm in Kahakuloa where he grows "kalo, along with mai'a, papayas, ulu, ti, un choi and watercress."

The husband and father of two grown girls is an exemplary community volunteer and role model.

Kawika Freitas, director of public and cultural relations at Old Lahaina Luau, described Nip's approach: "Al really enjoys playing music for anyone and everyone. You can really feel the aloha pouring out when he performs. Recently, Al Nip joined a team of volunteers from Old Lahaina Luau on a trip to Kalaupapa to do some clearing and landscaping work for the residents. Al made it a point to sing to every resident on the peninsula. It is his makana, or gift, to all he encounters."

Slack key tunings exemplify Nip's musical style, described on his website as "simple and sweet."

Sharing the culture through music, Nip currently teaches 'ukulele at Kaunoa Senior Center in Lahaina. He's a strolling musician at Old Lahaina Luau and performs at Duke's Beach House and on Second Fridays with the Maui Jam Band in Lahaina.

"The band has evolved over the years," Nip commented. He characterized the players as "fellow Hawaiian musicians who love to play traditional Hawaiian music."

Nip defined the title cut of the CD: "Although Kahalawai refers to the West Maui Mountains, I would like to think that they are most beautiful when being viewed from the ocean outside of Lahaina with Launiupoko, Kaua'ula, Kanaha and Kahoma Valleys, and with the mist which forms often along the cliffs of Kaua'ula and Launiupoko. This majestic beauty brings thoughts of all the beautiful friends and 'ohana who live in this special community; it is like no other place in our world."

CDs can be purchased and/or previewed at Mele.com, Maui Jam Band on Facebook, Maui Jam Band on Reverbnation, at the Lahaina Courthouse gift shops or by e-mailing mauijam@yahoo.com.