



The Senate

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Media Contact: Caroline Julian-Freitas/586-6261

Hawaii State Senate Honors the 50th Anniversary of the Merrie Monarch

Honolulu -- With the 50th anniversary of the Merrie Monarch just a few weeks away, the Hawaii State Senate honored the momentous occasion during its session last week Friday. Senators presented directors of the Merrie Monarch Festival, Luana, Kathleen and Colleen Kawelu, with a Certificate of Recognition to mark the anniversary.

“Eyes around the world focus on Hilo during the Merrie Monarch to enjoy the Hawaiian culture and arts,” said Sen. Gilbert Kahele, who represents Hilo. “The festival’s committee has done a wonderful job in helping to preserve and share our culture.”

The Merrie Monarch Festival, which began on April 1964, consisted of barbershop quartets, street dancing, fireworks and coronation pageants. In 1968, under the direction of George Na'ope and Dorothy “Dottie” Thompson, the festival focused on celebrating the Hawaiian culture.

Today, the festival is under the direction of the late Aunty Dottie Thompson’s daughter Luana Kawelu and granddaughters Colleen and Kathleen Kawelu. The event features remarkable exhibitions of dance by hula halau, whose members make months-long commitments to hone their mo’olelo and then present it to an enthusiastic audience of thousands. Considered the “Olympics of Hula,” the Merrie Monarch Festival is broadcast on television statewide and is also live streamed via the internet, making the unofficial count of viewers well in the range of the hundreds of thousands.

(Photo Courtesy: The Office of Senator Gilbert Kahele)

(Photo Caption: Senator Gilbert Kahele congratulates Colleen Kawelu.)

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