



ALFRED APAKA

In the lobby of the Hilton Hawaiian Village stands a bronze statue of the great romantic baritone, Alfred Aholo Apaka — *The Golden Voice of Hawai'i*. It recognizes his unique place in Hawai'i's musical history. As a family friend described it: "His ability to render a Hawaiian melody was unduplicated for the time, and perhaps forever."

Born in 1919, Apaka came from Hawaiian royalty. His great-aunt, Lydia Aholo, was the daughter of Queen Lili'uokalani. Apaka's son, Jeffrey, says, "I like to think that dad's musical training came in a direct line from the Queen." Apaka's father, Alfred Sr. was himself an accomplished musician and the two often performed together.

In the 1950s, Apaka was Hawai'i's most famous entertainer; a "must see" for all visitors. His unique voice and personality put Henry Kaiser's Hawaiian Village Hotel on the map. Tourism pioneer, George Kanahale wrote, "Alfred Apaka possessed one of the most remarkable voices to ever come out of Hawai'i."

Apaka soon became a featured singer on the legendary *Hawai'i Calls* radio broadcasts and later joined the *Moana Serenaders* at the Moana Hotel. Then in 1952, Bob Hope "discovered" him at Don the Beachcomber's. Appearances on Ed Sullivan's *Talk of The Town* and *The Dinah Shore Show* followed, giving national television exposure for both Apaka's golden voice and for Hawai'i.

Apaka staged lavish shows in the Hawaiian Village's *Tapa Room* and later in the geodesic dome built to accommodate his large crowds. He became a recording star, spreading the appreciation of Hawaiian music to the world. Apaka was planning a national television special at the time of his unexpected death at age forty in 1960.

Apaka's fame lives on. In 1997, he was honored with a *Nā Hōkū Hanohano Lifetime Achievement Award*. A posthumous album, the *Lost Recordings of Hawai'i's Golden Voice*, was released 1999. Describing an Apaka performance, one reviewer wrote: *When Apaka sang, a hush fell over those listening. It was romantic and strong. It made you dream.* No wonder Apaka and his golden voice have become legend.