

Dedication of Hokulani Imaginarium
12 October 2001
Joseph Ciotti

Aloha. Good morning ... and welcome. My name is Joe Ciotti and it's my honor to be your host at today's special celebration, as we dedicate WCC's new Imaginarium.

Four years ago on this very day, the Science Building (Hale 'Imiloa) the Hall of Discovery was dedicated as WCC's first new facility. And so, it is doubly fitting that on this October 12th (Discoverers Day) we celebrate a new center of learning and discovery. This inner drive to explore and discover is an essential part of what defines our common human spirit—transcending all cultures and races. It is a heritage greatly treasured in Hawaii.

All explorations begin with a dream and a healthy sense of imagination. One could say the dream for this Imaginarium began nearly forty years ago with this small notebook. A spiral notebook that eventually brought me to Hawaii as one of the University's first graduate students in astronomy.

In a short time, this book sent me to the Bishop Museum planetarium where I was fortunate to study under one of Hawaii's outstanding navigation instructors...a man who would eventually become my trusted colleague and good friend: Louis Valier.

What was written in these pages inspired me to master the skills of a planetarium lecturer under a master planetarium director, George Bunton. I was trained by the very best.

When I was hired at WCC in 1987, I was asked what facility I'd like to designed into the college's still budding plans for its proposed Science Building. My answer: a planetarium. Hawaii was still the only state without a planetarium affiliated with a formal educational institution. And while the justifications for its educational value came from my growing experience in the planetarium field ... the inspiration still came from this book [a personal spiral notebook written while at the American Museum-Hayden Planetarium].

My search for an ideal planetarium projector took me through various countries and across the entire mainland USA. Actual planning, design and construction accumulated into some ten years of work. This theater is modeled after the Christa McAuliffe Planetarium in Concord, NH. And unlike a traditional planetarium, it

too has a special projector system that is not limited to reproducing the starry sky. Its special computer system allows us create virtually any image the mind can imagine. With its state-of-the-art technology in virtual reality, this projector can take an audience on a journey through the human body, inside a DNA molecule, around an archaeological site, like the pyramids, or a heiau, across space to another galaxy, and even back in time to the age of the dinosaurs. It is truly an Imaginarium.

And for me, the imagination began with this small spiral notebook. You see, when I was 16 years old, I received a summer grant to study at the American Museum-Hayden Planetarium in Manhattan, New York City. All my notes and, as I look back now, all my aspirations that summer were penciled in this notebook. I was inspired by teachers and awed by the magic of a planetarium.

This is where dreams begin. I tell my students that the sky is not the limit. Don't be afraid to reach for the moon ... for even if you miss it, you'll be among the stars.

Today is the beginning of a yearlong celebrate of Windward's Imaginarium — called "First Light." First Light is a term astronomers use to describe that once-in-a-lifetime event when a new observatory's telescope opens its eyes to the skies and begins to collect its first light from distant stars and planet. It signifies a beginning—seeing and measuring a previously unknown phenomenon, learning something new about the universe, launching a career of exploration and discovery.

Besides supporting WCC's strong program in the marine, earth and space sciences as well as our Polynesian Voyaging program, the Imaginarium will be added to Windward's growing list of educational resources (such as our Aerospace Exploration Lab, upcoming Performance Theater and Art Gallery) which have long served our children in grades K-12 as well as our local community at large.

I am happy to announce today that the Harold KL Castle Foundation has just award WCC's Imaginarium a \$93,000 grant to press forward with our K-12 outreach plans throughout this First Light year of celebration. And for that we are most grateful.

It's now my special privilege to call forward to perform the blessing of the Imaginarium a very good friend and colleague of mine (when we both taught at St. Louis HS) and a highly respected kumu hula, Kahu John Keola Lake.