

INFLUENCED BY HIS PARENTS, INSPIRED BY IOLANI SCHOOL: THE MAN WHO BECAME OUR MAYOR



CENTER PHOTO: GARRETT NOSE '74 OTHER PHOTOS: COURTESY THE HANNEMANN FAMILY

Muliufi Francis Hannemann '72 is the 12th Mayor of the City & County of Honolulu.

By Cathy Lee Chong

For four decades, the name Hannemann has made headlines and the evening news for accomplishments in basketball, business, community service and politics. But there was a time when **Colin Ching '72** had never heard it.

During the seventh grade at Iolani, Ching met a new boy named **Muliufi Francis Hannemann '72**, who had just come from a public elementary school in Kalihi. Teachers initially mispronounced the Samoan first name. But what Ching remembers the most about this new student was he was “pretty tall.”

Despite the 12-inch difference in their heights back then, Ching and Hannemann eventually became the closest of friends. Ching called him “Ufi,” as did Hannemann’s family and friends in Kalihi. Ching lived in Hau’ula where his family owned a supermarket, and Hannemann’s family spent a lot of time going to church in neighboring La’ie. Come their senior year, they both took AP English from **Harold Keables**. Ching was elected senior class president, while Hannemann won the votes to be student council president. They were also big Elvis fans.



Top: As a baby, Muliufi is in his mother's arms.



Bottom: Mufi attended public elementary schools in Kalihi.

Now, some 40 years later, Ching responds to the question: Did you foresee that your childhood friend would become Honolulu's mayor?

"Yes, I did," Ching says. "I was always impressed with Mufi's focus. He has never lost sight. He's a great leader and he has always been ambitious. We've always been close friends."

Mufi Hannemann was elected on November 2, 2004, as the 12th mayor of the City & County of Honolulu after defeating opponent Duke Bainum by 1,350 votes. He is the first Oahu-born mayor since Neal Blaisdell left office in 1968.

(The name Mufi was coined when he was an Iolani basketball star by sportswriter **Jim Easterwood** and coach **Dan Feldhaus**. His mother named him after her grandfather, **Muliufi Soliai**, a Samoan chief.)

Mufi is not only Hawaii's highest elected public official to have graduated from Iolani, but at 6'7" he is one of the tallest as well. His mayor's desk had to be redesigned to accommodate his knees.

But what is this man behind the koa desk really like?

Getting to know Mufi is a discovery of contrasts. He was raised in a working class Kalihi family, yet Mufi went on to graduate cum laude from Harvard University. It has been said he was the university's first Samoan student.

At Iolani, he was a basketball and football jock, but he was also an erudite fascinated by literature, poetry, and history. He even sang in the school choir and received the Headmaster's Award at graduation.

While being a politician means constantly making new friends and gaining powerful allies, Mufi's family and childhood friendships remain a vital force in his life.

The Hannemann family in 1969. Front row (left to right), brother Miller Hannemann; mother Faiaso Soliai Hannemann; father Gustav A. T. Hannemann; brother Gus Hannemann, Jr. Top row (left to right); brother Nephi Hannemann, sister Faiaso "Titi" Hannemann; sister Gafanua Memea; sister Lady Va'ofua Maughan; Muliufi Francis Hannemann.



With the endless social obligations, receptions and parties he attends, Mufi does not drink alcohol.

And while he will always be a local boy at heart (when away at college, he grimaced at mashed potatoes and longed for rice), he is worldly, sophisticated, and well traveled.

He acknowledges that Hawaii's traditional lures of sun, sand, sea and surf are steadfast, but he wants modern "science and technology" to be Hawaii's next "S" on the list.

Even his bloodline -- Samoan, English and German -- reflects a contrasting global heritage.

Mufi's political radar is set on improving Hawaii's future, but he reveres tradition and Hawaii's past.

"As busy as I am as mayor, I want to continue to be a member of the Iolani board," he says. "I still want to be a member of the alumni association. I still want to be involved with Family Fair, go to the basketball games, football games ... Iolani has given me so much. When I think about the icons at Iolani over the years, like Father Bray and Coach Hamada, I sit back and think, 'I'm one lucky guy.'"

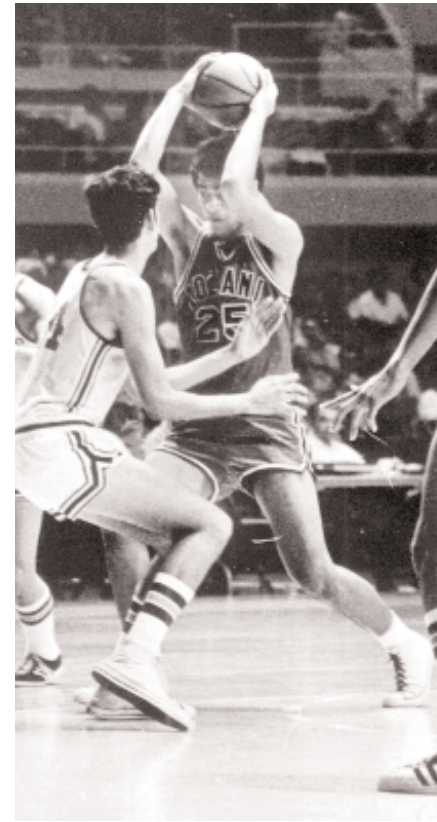
This lucky guy was born the sixth of seven children of **Gustav** and **Faiaso Hannemann**, who emigrated from America Samoa to Hawaii by way of Guam in 1953. Gustav worked at Foremost Dairies and as a shoe salesman at both Sears Roebuck and Liberty House. He later became a Mormon bishop. Faiaso was a full-time mother and cared for extended family members from Samoa staying with them until they got on their feet.

"Family came first," Mufi says. "Church was very important to my parents. We all went to Sunday School. We weren't allowed to smoke or drink. We were encouraged to do church work, family work, as well as our homework."

Gustav and Faiaso were not able to fulfil their own personal educational desires, so they passed them on to their children. Mufi's mother would walk him to the Kalihi Palama Library to borrow books so that he would develop an appetite for reading and knowledge. She dreamed that one of her children would someday go to Harvard, where American presidents went to school.

As an elementary school kid, Mufi wanted to follow his older siblings' footsteps and graduate from Farrington High, where he could play sports on the same teams they did. Instead, he was enrolled in Iolani in his seventh grade year.

"In my case, my parents said, 'Athletics is one thing, but educa-



On the court, Mufi was an all star athlete.

Muliufi Hannemann
Recipient of the Headmaster's Medal

"Yet, in considering all these honors, there was one factor in your make-up that stood out for me. So much publicity was given you that you were a marked man, especially in athletics. At one point people wondered what you are made of. In your last two years, after injuries, you showed them determination and team play. You played for Iolani School, not Mufi Hannemann. You learned to swallow the jibes of baiters and press on.

— past Headmaster Rev. David P. Coon





Mufi was selected as a White House fellow.

tion is more important,” Mufi says. “I bought into it. I really had no choice. But I felt coming from a family with my parents being very strict and spiritual, everything was based on what the family did together. We prayed together. We played together. We stayed together. I could see they had a mission for me. That was to go to school, get the best education possible, then give back and contribute. They were immigrant folks. They moved here for a better life for their children, a better life for themselves.”

The transition to Iolani wasn't easy. But making his parents proud by attending Iolani helped him overcome any homesickness or longing for his old friends. Today, he also credits Iolani's administrators, teachers and students for making him feel welcome and for accommodating a kid “fresh out of Kalihi.”

“The hardest part about Iolani,” Mufi says, “is getting accepted. But once in, the school does everything to help you succeed and go on to college.”

Joseph Yelas, now retired and living in Tyler, Texas, was Mufi's ninth grade algebra teacher and college counselor. He remembers Mufi as being an outstanding student, who was keenly smart, nice, with high aspirations and a lot of push from his parents. Mufi made the Headmaster's List and belonged to several student organizations.

Sitting, literally, head and shoulders above the rest of his classmates, Mufi already showed signs that he would go places.

“He was not only smart intellectually,” Yelas conveys. “He had a good understanding of people. He could win people over and articulate his points. I'm not at all surprised he's doing so well. He's a good role model for all people.”

Eddie Hamada '46 coached the football team, and Mufi was a wide receiver and tight end.

“For a guy like me, who's been coaching for a number of years, you appreciate guys like him, who are students of the game,” Hamada says. “They make it easier for us because they follow everything you ask of them without any complaints. For some young players, it's hard for them to comprehend what you're asking them to do, but he always did what we asked without any complaint. As I look back, I was so fortunate to have players like Mufi.”

William Lee '53, retired dean of students who was then Mufi's eighth grade geography teacher, notes that “no kid I've ever talked to at that age was so focused.”

If the jump from Kalihi to Iolani was a big one, then the leap from Hawaii to Harvard was gargantuan. Yet Mufi desired an education inside and outside of the classroom. Boston was where he would be exposed to a different culture, history, weather conditions, and life style from his own upbringing.

Classmate Colin Ching recalls gently telling his best friend during their senior year that he didn't think Harvard accepted Samoans. But Mufi proved him wrong, and waved his acceptance letter over his head when he saw Ching on campus. The accomplishment was another way of repaying his parents for their sacrifices. He was also accepted by Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Brown and Cornell.



In June 1976, Mufi graduated from Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



PHOTO: GARRETT NOSE '74

Mufi talks comfortably in his office.

Muliufi Francis Hannemann '72

Born: July 16, 1954, in Honolulu

Education: 1976 cum laude graduate of Harvard University; Fulbright scholar at Victoria University in New Zealand

Family: Sixth of seven children born to Gustav and Faiaso Hannemann (both deceased); married to Gail Mukaihata Hannemann

Career: Taught history and coached varsity basketball at Iolani. Joined the administration of Gov. George Ariyoshi in 1979. Became a special assistant with the Department of the Interior's Office of Territorial and International Affairs in 1980. Selected for a White House fellowship in the Reagan administration under Vice President Bush in 1983. Worked for C. Brewer & Co. Ltd. from 1984 to 1991, leaving as vice president for corporate marketing and public affairs. Appointed by Gov. John Waihee as head of international relations, then director of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. Elected to the City Council in 1994 and re-elected in 1998. Served as council chairman for one year.

Favorite meal: "I love oatmeal for breakfast. When I want to splurge, I'll have a good ole hot cake."

Favorite place to visit: "Washington, D.C. --There's something about that city that brings out my urge and desire to be a fervent American and to be proud of the fact that I belong to the greatest country in the world."

Favorite recent book: *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman

Favorite movie: *Splendor in the Grass*

Most influential people in his life: "No question -- My Mom and Dad. I miss them. I love them so much."

Most embarrassing moment: "Every first day of a new school year when I had to correct the teacher on how to pronounce my name."

Favorite memory from high school: "When I persuaded the football team to dance the hula for May Day. . . . Back then, a lot of boys didn't dance hula."

Mufi's parents visited him at Harvard during freshman parents weekend in the fall of his first crimson year. As freshman council president, Mufi addressed students and their families. That made Gustav and Faiaso very proud. Amidst the historic Ivy League halls and sprawling campus, where many other students came from affluent or established families, Mufi felt equally proud to have his parents with him. They instilled in him his work ethic and love for public service.

At the end of Mufi's freshman year, in June, his mother passed away at the age of 58. Her last wish was to be buried in American Samoa.

Mufi's father died in 2001 just shy of his 90th birthday. He's buried in Laie.



Mufi worked in the Reagan administration as a White House fellow under Vice President Bush in 1983.

At Harvard, Mufi went on to become a varsity basketball letterman and cum laude graduate. He moved on to become a Fulbright Scholar at Victoria University in New Zealand, one of Mufi's favorite locations because of its blend of Polynesian and European cultures.

His career has taken him to places as diverse as Iolani School -- where he was a history teacher and basketball coach -- and Washington, D.C.. He worked in the administrations of presidents Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. He was also a special assistant to Gov. George Ariyoshi, served as director of

Dear Mayor Hannemann,

Congratulations on your recent inauguration as Mayor of Honolulu. I remember looking up at you from my desk at Iolani and thinking you would someday be Governor -- I wasn't far off.

Never much of a student, I remember you pushing me, expecting more from me. It made me dislike you, but your motivation paid off. I got my grades up and attended the University of Washington and later transferred to and graduated from UCLA.

I've had a successful career as an operations executive, currently as the president and COO of a \$100 million marketing company. I've been happily married for 12 years, and we have three children all attending private school here in Laguna Beach, California.

A warm aloha goes out to you for being an important figure in steering my life in the right direction. Hopefully, I will make my way back to Hawaii and finish off my career where it all started.

Best regards,
Terrence Yacap
Iolani Class of 1984

Terrence Yacap is with Interactive Consulting Group, Inc. He wrote this letter to Mayor Mufi Hannemann on September 6, 2005. Mufi taught history from 1978 to 1979 and was the varsity basketball coach from 1977 to 1980 at Iolani.



Top, Mufi received the Honolulu Mayoral Campaign endorsement from Governor George Ariyoshi in September 2000. Bottom, Mufi is sworn in during the City Council Inauguration in January 1999.

the state Office of International Relations and Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. He was vice president for corporate marketing and public affairs at C. Brewer and Company, Ltd. He ran unsuccessfully for Congress and mayor previously, was elected to the City Council in 1994 and re-elected in 1998.

He dedicated his victory in the 2004 mayor's race to his parents. Soon after winning, he returned to American Samoa to visit his mother's grave. His wife supported him wholeheartedly in making the trip.

"I wanted to go back there," Mufi says. "My siblings wanted to join me so they went with me. I just wanted to go there to tell my mom how much I appreciated her determination, her dedication, her stubbornness in making sure I studied hard, that I incorporated all of the things she wanted me to do and understood the importance of prayer and church.

"I visit my dad's grave regularly in La'ie where I sit there and talk story with the hardest working individual and most ethical man that I've ever known," he says.

Mufi has been married to **Gail Mukaihata Hannemann** for 13 years. Like Mufi, Gail is professionally driven. As CEO of the Girl Scouts of Hawaii and president of the Hawaii Alliance of the Arts, Gail, like Mufi, is a leader who believes in public service. A graduate of UCLA, Gail has three sisters and was born in Torrance, California, where her mother still lives.

Mufi met Gail in Washington, D.C., when she worked for two congressmen and held other political jobs, but their relationship took time to evolve from a professional one to a friendship and then to romance. When they do have private time, they enjoy the arts, love to dine out, read good literature, and spend time with their families.

"With Gail, she knows how to relax better than I do," Mufi says. "I'm a hard charger. I play hard. I work hard. She's taught me that oftentimes I have to take time out, and just stop, smell the roses. Gail does that very well. She knows how to relax by reading a good book, or just having a quiet time. She knows how to balance things very well."

Balancing needs and resources is Mufi's priority as mayor. He has already received nods of approval for his pragmatic approach during his first year as mayor, tending to the city's basic needs such as repairing potholes, streets and broken sewers and emphasizing public safety. He has also sworn that taxes and fees raised for specific



Mufi and Gail Hannemann have been married since 1992.

purposes will be spent for only those purposes. One day a week, he works out of his office in Kapolei to be more accessible to West Oahu residents.

Mufi has built a cabinet of experienced and well-qualified team members. He also has a solid relationship with the city council which he credits to treating council members the way he wanted to be treated when he was there. He says he regards them as “co-leaders” of this city.

Basically, Mufi is a man who loves what he does.

“Gail likens me to a kindergartner going off to school for the first time,” he says. “I can’t wait to get out the door and go out and do my job.”

Being mayor is all about making the city even better, he says. What people want is to know their government officials are spending tax payers’ dollars wisely. People also want to trust officials to make decisions in the best interests of the city, not for a few, privileged individuals.

One thing Iolani taught him is that he must do his homework and collect the facts before making decisions. Another thing that remains with him is the One Team philosophy.

“This concept of no “I” in team,” Mufi says, “you know, is what I learned at Iolani. At the end of the day, it takes leadership to bring us together. That’s the concept I’m taking with me as mayor. We should all feel that we’re in it together, that no one individual, no one business, no one organization is greater than the other.”

The journey from Iolani School to Honolulu Hale has elevated Mufi into one of Hawaii’s most recognizable officials, but, like his devotion to family, Mufi’s dedication to his alma mater is unflinching.

Mufi returned for a recent Class of ’72 reunion and worked in the pizza booth at Family Fair with his classmates. He continues to serve on the Board of Governors, annually donates the Harvard Book Award to a student at Honors Day, and represents his family at the Iolani Scholarship Breakfast where he meets students who are recipients of the Gustav and Faiaso Hannemann Scholarship.

Recalling his days as a Raider, he rattles off names of classmates and alumni with familiarity and affection. He remembers the days when only boys, many carrying Pan Am bags, filled the classrooms of Iolani. He fondly looks back at the school that helped open doors to places like Harvard, to lifelong friendships, and to a career in public service.

“We’re the same products of Iolani School. I’m very grateful to be a member of the Class of ’72,” Mufi says. “We learned from **Eddie Hamada**, were touched by people like **Dave Coon**. I will never forget my English teacher **Harold Keables**, my history teacher **Robert Sleight**, my college counselor **Joe Yelas**, my basketball coach **Daniel Feldhaus**, and friends like **Bill Lee ’53** and **Toni Brown**. They are typical of the many people at Iolani who have touched me along the way.” ■



Mufi believes being mayor is about making the city even better.

