Introduction

The Setting of the University of Hawaii’s Manoa Campus

by Charles S. Bouslog

The campus sits at the mouth of Manoa Valley, where it widens and moves across the plain to Waikiki and the sea. The valley is wide and deep, the back walls slanting gradually. It is like an amphitheater. The only other Hawaiian valley with a similar shape is smaller Waipio Valley on the Big Island. In geologic time, many secondary eruptions turned a series of eroded, deep valleys into a flat floor. These former valleys survive only as wide incised grooves extending down the steep walls of 2,000 foot pali’s. The climate has been described as somewhat “Mediterranean.” Precipitation at the head may be more than 160 inches a year; at the University it is about thirty.

Cooling tradewinds from the northeast flow at ten to forty miles per hour during most of the year. There are perhaps three square miles.

At the head of the valley, where cumulus clouds rest much of the time, rains may provide as many as ten waterfalls, each of which has a name. The largest and best known is “Manoa Falls.” At its base is a sizeable pool, in which according to legend, resides a mo’o that eats people; but the pool is much used, especially after hiking up and down the steep trail behind it. Manoa Stream, filled by the many waterfalls, runs some 5.9 miles, passes on the eastern rim of the campus, between the East-West Center and Waahila Ridge, and drains a 3,500 acre area. The stream had been diverted to the east by a lava flow from Puu Kakea (Sugar Loaf), a cinder cone on the ridge below Tantalus. The campus itself sits on this gently sloping flow, with the man-made Quarry at the edge of the flow.

There is the frequent spectacle of rainbows, for rain spreading over the mountains into the upper valley may encounter bright, iridescently transforming sunshine. Hence the name of Manoa athletic teams.

The campus is in three main parts: (1) the Makai Campus (below Dole Street, now occupied by student dormitories and the new Law School Library and the entire Quarry); (2) the Central (bounded by Dole Street, University Avenue, Mid-Pacific Institute, and faculty housing; and including the Bio-Medical complex and the auxiliary services areas); and (3) the non-contiguous Mauka Campus (containing the University of Hawaii Press, the Astronomy Institute, and tropical agriculture areas, along Kolowalu Street and Woodlawn Drive). There is also the Lyon Arboretum near the head of the valley and on the seaside at Waikiki is the aquarium. In 1982, this covered 427 acres:

1. Main Campus (258.58 acres)
   (1) Makai Campus 88.6 acres
   (2) Central Campus
       Education (West of University Ave.) 126.08
       (3) Mauka Campus 15.4
   2. Lyon Arboretum 28.5
   3. Waikiki Aquarium 124
   4. Faculty Apartments 2.35
   4. Faculty Apartments 42.7