

## **The Founder of the Hawaii Association of the Blind**

The Hawaii Association of the Blind was the brainchild of Warren Toyama; his ideas and efforts brought it into being. He was its first president, and has been its most dedicated member as well as an important leader.

Warren M. Toyama was born in Kohala on the Big Island of Hawaii, in the small community of Hawi. After attending elementary school for a few years, he was forced by State law to attend the Territorial School for the Deaf and Blind on Oahu, at the tender age of eight. There he learned many skills, most notably reading and writing in braille. He then attended Kawananakoa Intermediate School, and went on to McKinley High School for one semester. Eventually, Warren graduated from Kohala High School, and continued on to the University of Hawaii. In 1959 he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology.

Upon graduating, this ambitious scholar began working for Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, publishers of the World Book Encyclopedia, where he soon rose to the position of District Sales Manager. In 1962, he became part of a corporation of ten blind stockholders who successfully won the bid to operate the Honolulu International Airport Newsstand Concession. During its eight years in business, Warren served as the president and general manager.

In 1971, he purchased and operated a cocktail lounge, and in 1982 he entered the Blind Vending Facility program. In 1985, Warren was the recipient of the Eva H. Smyth Award. This coveted award is presented by the Hawaii Association of the Blind to an individual who has made distinguished contributions to the welfare and well-being of the blind people of Hawaii. Finally, in 1986, the Hawaii Blind Vendors Association presented Warren Toyama with the very first Blind Vendor of the Year Award.

Warren Toyama has always been involved in helping others. In his early twenties, he taught Sunday school classes, and he headed the junior high-level Christian Endeavor program at his church. He also helped organize bowling leagues for the blind, and later helped form a bowling club for the blind.

This intelligent, ambitious, and hard-working man has been available at all times of the day or night to assist blind individuals with their problems. He has put his personal reputation and job security on the line many times in order to further the cause of the blind in Hawaii.

Warren Toyama and his wife, Julia, have one daughter, Joy Nami.

The basic philosophy that drives this leader of the blind is that blind people ought to have equal access and equal opportunity to succeed in life with the sighted. No man-made barriers, such as discrimination, prejudice, custodialism, or overprotection, should thwart a blind person's quest for happiness in our society.