I recently returned from Denver and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conference. Our bodies may have shivered in the chilly Colorado weather, but our hearts were warmed in the Convention Center by speakers who were some of the best I’ve ever heard.

We began with a compelling presentation by Jim Collins, a Stanford University professor and author of Good to Great. His words resonated with the thousands who heard him and set the stage for the remainder of the conference. Although unintended, what followed appeared to emanate from his central theme: Greatness.

A presentation by Azar Nafisi, bestselling author of Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books, started us on the path from good to great. Ms. Nafisi was expelled from her professorship at the University of Tehran for choosing not to wear the Islamic veil. She spoke of living under tyrannical rule—a place where “imagination is insubordination”—and of teaching western literature to girls in her home at the risk of punishment, even death. Now a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, in her home at the risk of punishment, even death. Now a professor of political science and the concept of greatness as framed by Jim Collins. I was deeply touched. Never before have I been more humbled by the acts of others in support of others. I thought that our successes and triumphs pale in comparison to the greatness that these individuals have achieved.

But then I thought of the heroes and heroines of 9/11 and the Iraqi war, people who saved lives at their own peril, and how their names may be lost, but not their deeds. This brought to mind the good work of our own teachers, counselors, staff members, parents and students who work hard and sacrifice much to assist others in their growth and development. In a more modest, but no less important way, they too save lives and are touched by greatness.

The next morning we started the day with another standing ovation, as Paul Rusesabagina, author of An Ordinary Man: an Autobiography and central character of the film Hotel Rwanda, approached the stage. Most of us already knew his story and the concept of greatness as framed by Jim Collins. I was deeply touched. Never before have I been more humbled by the acts of others in support of others. I thought that our successes and triumphs pale in comparison to the greatness that these individuals have achieved.

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A life spent helping others is a life well spent.

By Cathy Lee Chong

“We can’t turn back time, but we can preserve it from being lost.”

— Samsung magazine ad in Shanghai

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen first glimpsed Western culture as a student at ‘Iolani School. His vision led him to become the father of modern China and a leader revered around the world today.

By Al Castle

Overlooking Sullivan Courtyard, a group of students gathers on a lanai. Nearby plumeria trees cast morning shadows on pathways. With open school bags before them and open minds towards the future, students laugh and talk freely.

On the opposite side of the courtyard, someone else overlooks the grassy lawn. It is a bronze statue of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, who sits regally with one hand flat and one in a fist. The natural oxidation process has turned the bronze into a blend of subdued green and brown radiance. Sun Yat-Sen gazes over red ti leaf plants, lana‘e ferns and into the distance. What does he see?

Sun Yat-Sen sees a modern ‘Iolani School vastly different than the one he attended more than 100 years ago. Then he was called Tai Cheong or Tai Chu. With long hair pulled back in a traditional queue, he was called Tai Cheong or Tai Chu. With long hair pulled back in a traditional queue, he was enrolled in 1879 without knowing any English. He learned quickly, exposed to English constitutional law and European history in a small, wooden frame school house at one of ‘Iolani’s earlier locations.

The ‘Iolani School campus from 1872 to 1962 was located at Bates Street and Ninuanu Street. Sun Yat-Sen studied at this campus which has since been demolished. Courtesy ‘Iolani archives.

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Dr. Sun Yat-Sen sees a modern ‘Iolani School vastly different than the one he attended more than 100 years ago. Then he was called Tai Cheong or Tai Chu. With long hair pulled back in a traditional queue, he was enrolled in 1879 without knowing any English. He learned quickly, exposed to English constitutional law and European history in a small, wooden frame school house at one of ‘Iolani’s earlier locations.

In the year 2007, he also views a co-educational student body that comes from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. ‘Iolani students are now generations and cultures apart from the ones he studied alongside. In the late 1800s, ‘Iolani catered to Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian boys who were instructed mainly by a British faculty brought to Hawaii by the Anglican Church. “That was his first exposure to a Christian school that stressed fundamental liberal arts,” historian Al Castle said in the documentary Finding Sandalwood Mountain: The Migration of Chinese to Hawaii. He added that Sun Yat-Sen became a “very good writer” and wrote for the ‘Iolani school newspaper.

Sun Yat-Sen’s first glimpse of Western culture led towards a movement that would eventually change the most populated nation in the world. This early ‘Iolani graduate began to see the possibilities for a better China.
Aft er studying Sun Yat Sen, I discovered that he was both a regular guy and a genuine super star,” said Kevin Otsuka ’07, who will be attending Stanford University this fall. “He was just one man, but he was able to bring so many people together for one goal.”

“Sun Yat-Sen had amazing passion,” said Sun Mei, a successful rice farmer graduated in 1882, he was awarded a prize observer for ten days since he could speak English and Chinese. This sign was posted at the University of King in 1918. Sun Yat-Sen led the 1911 revolution and overthrew the monarchy and founded the republic in China,” according to a book from the Shanghai International Film Festival joined their talents. “Finding Sun Yat-Sen” will be broadcast on PBS Hawaii, and appear in the Shanghai International Film Festival. Sun Yat-Sen’s stor y

Empow er young people with tools to express themselves, and let them tell an important story. The result will be an educational experience worthy of the community’s attention and the creation of learning opportunities for others.

Thus, ‘Iolani and Wai’anae high schools joined their talents. “Finding Sun Yat-Sen” will be broadcast on PBS Hawaii, and appear in the Shanghai International Film Festival. Sun Yat-Sen led the 1911 revolution and in 1912 was named the first provisional president of the Republic of China. Documented in many of the hallowed museums dedicated to Sun Yat-Sen in other parts of the world is the mind boggling fact that long ago he was a pupil at ‘Iolani School in tiny Hawaii.

“‘Iolani students worked on the documentary as an independent study project under the guidance of ‘Iolani Director of Studies Dr. Deborah Hall. They visited Bishop Museum, met with several sources, read history books and articles, watch ed videos and talked to descendants of those who knew Sun Yat-Sen. They interviewed Steven Ai ’72, president of the Sun Yat-Sen Hawaii Foundation and a member of the ‘Iolani Board of Governors. Steven Ai is the grandson of Chung Ken Ai (1965-1963), who was an ‘Iolani classmate of Sun Yat-Sen’s and a dedicated supporter during the early years of the revolutionary movement.

“In China, there have been a lot of historical documentaries on Sun Yat-Sen’s life," Kosaka said, “but we wanted a student’s perspective on the experiences he had in high school and in Hawaii. We thought, ‘Why don’t we tell a good story from a personal view?’” Kosaka approached ‘Iolani in early 2006 with the hope that students skilled in research and writing would be inspired to learn more about a charismatic leader who was about their age when he first saw the world beyond China. She then got Wai’anae and their Emmy-award winning Searsiders involved.

‘Iolani students worked on the documentary during their senior year. Kosaka approached ‘Iolani in early 2006 with the hope that students skilled in research and writing would be inspired to learn more about a charismatic leader who was about their age when he first saw the world beyond China. She then got Wai’anae and their Emmy-award winning Searsiders involved.

Finding Sun Yat-Sen’s stor y

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Tributes to Sun Yat-Sen were written in English and Chinese. This sign was posted at the University of Hong Kong.

“We all learned that Dr. Sun was the creator of modern China and that he went to Hawaii as a boy because his brother was there,” said John Allen, director of the documentary and advisor for Wai’anae Searsiders Production. Likewise, Wai’anae has the top student video production team in Hawaii, and ‘Iolani’s students were honored to work with the talented and creative Wai’anae students.

The project’s executive producer Melanie Kosaka wanted to do a documentary about Sun Yat-Sen with a fresh, more edgy tone. PBS Hawaii had received a grant from the state Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism for a collaborative media project on China.

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Young Sen Yat raised money for the air force to support Sun Yat-Sen’s revolution and died in a battle fighting for its cause.

“You wonder where China would be today, if Sun Yat-Sen hadn’t come to Hawai’i and experienced the different values here, such as democracy and Christianity, and found his supporters,” Ronaka remarked.

After months of research, the ‘Iolani and Wai'anae students embarked on a 12-day trip in January 2007, visiting places where Sun Yat-Sen lived to gain a deeper understanding of who he was.

The students on the trip included Kevin Otsuka ‘07, Sarah Fang ‘09, Alex Chantavy ‘07, Evan Kam ‘07, Alapaki Silva (Wai’anae ‘07), Marshall Mole (Wai’anae ‘07), and Alopeki Silva (Wai’anae ‘07). ‘Iolani’s Dr. Deborah Hall, Mandarin teacher Catherine Beaver, and Director of Institutional Advancement Jane Heimerdingen accompanied the students. Also on the trip were the documentary’s director John Allen, producer David Late, and still photographer Catherine Beaver, all professionals on the Seawider’s team. Terrence Quinsaat, who represented PBS Hawaii, also made the journey.

The group first stopped in Hong Kong and visited the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Museum, which opened in December 2006 in the newly restored 90-year-old Kom Tong Hall. Sun Yat-Sen graduated from medical school at what is now the University of Hong Kong.

Dr. Osmand Chan, the museum’s chief curator, led the students through the museum’s three stories. They saw a reconstructed scene of Sun Yat-Sen with the “Four Desperados” (Yang Heling, Chen Shaobai, Yan Li and Guan Jingliang). They read Sun Yat-Sen’s answer sheets for an anatomy examination in 1888. They saw one of his actual suits behind a glass case. Chan visited ‘Iolani two years ago while doing research.

“Do you think Sun Yat-Sen expanded Christianity,” Kevin Otsuka ‘07 asked of Chan. “Yes,” answered Chan and then shared stories about how events in Sun Yat-Sen’s life revealed his ties to Hawai’i.

Sun Yat-Sen introduced his medical school roommate, Guan Jingliang, to his friend, Lee Kam Amoe, who was a woman laborer from Hawai’i, and the couple got married in Te Tsui Chapel in Hong Kong. Chan noted that Sun Yat-Sen was baptized in Hong Kong.

“His relationship to Christianity dates back to his time in Hawai’i,” Chan explained.

At the Hong Kong Museum of History, students gathered around a giant bust of Sun Yat-Sen in the center of the front lobby, posing for a photograph the way fans flock to rock stars.

The ‘Iolani and Wai’anae group also traveled to Sun Yat-Sen’s birthplace in Cuiheng Village in Zhongshan, Guangdong Province, China. They saw his childhood home with the original furnishings purchased in Hawaii and sent back to China.

Near his restored home that incorporates western and Chinese architecture is the two-story Museum of History, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Cuiheng.

The first floor focuses on his education, work, and revolution. A large photograph of ‘Iolani’s old Willie Hall from the Nuuauu campus is on display with the description: “In the autumn of 1879, Sun Yat-Sen enrolled in the ‘Iolani School in Honolulu. He began to receive Western education.”

The second floor of the museum highlights his family and friends. Students learned that Sun Yat-Sen had three wives over different times in his life.

His first wife was Lu Muzhen, who was also from Cuiheng. They married in 1884 and had a son, Sun Fe (a graduate of St. Louis School in Honolulu), and two daughters, Sun Yan and Sun Wan. Sun Yat-Sen’s second wife, Chen Cuifen, was through common law marriage. They were partners in the early stages of his revolution.

But his most famous wife was Soong Ching Ling. She married Sun Yat-Sen in 1915 and, after his death in 1925, continued the cause to better China until her death in 1981.

The group then traveled to Sun Yat-Sen’s childhood home in Cuiheng Village, Zhongshan, Guangdong Province. They saw his childhood home and his restored home that was through various times in his life.

At Sun Yat-Sen’s childhood home in Cuiheng Village, Zhongshan, Guangdong Province. Left to right, Kevin Otsuka ‘07, Alex Chantavy ‘07, Kevin Kam ‘07, Sarah Fang ‘09 and Karlyn Kurokawa ‘07

Students visited the Museum of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in Cuiheng Village.

Following a graduation at the University of Hong Kong, a group of girls embrace a statue of Sun Yat-Sen that is situated in a garden with a pond and tall trees. Behind them, a billboard promotes a Sun Yat-Sen exhibit.

The ‘Iolani students visited the Salesian School in Hong Kong and asked a panel of English speaking boys their impressions of Sun Yat-Sen.
The ‘Iolani students learned that Sun Yat-Sen as a boy had a rascally side to him. Hoisting boom mics and cameras, Wai‘anae’s students filmed their spirit of discovery and their youthful reactions. “I enjoyed hearing the story about Sun as a young boy,” said Evan Kam ‘07. “Sun’s friend played a joke and bullied him. In retaliation, Sun broke the wok that his friend’s family used. This story revealed a lighter side to Sun and made him seem like a regular person, especially since famous historical people like Sun are placed on pedestals.”

The group also traveled north to the city of Nanjing where his mausoleum and tomb rest. While he died in 1925 in Beijing of liver cancer, his body was moved to Nanjing in 1929.

Chilly 20 degree temperatures did not hinder the students from hiking 392 ascending steps divided by ten platforms to the mausoleum. The final height is 70 meters, with a heavenly view that overlooks majestic mountains. A guard waved off photographers overlooking the tomb in a sunken circle of the mausoleum.

Just east is Nanjing’s Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall. Here, Sarah Fang ’09 and Karlyn Kurakawa ’07 stopped to look at a large painting of Sun Yat-Sen at the age of 13 standing on the deck of a ship bound for Hawaii.

“Before going on this trip, we all did extensive research on him so that we practically knew his life story,” Fang said. “However we were still able to learn a lot of new things about him.”

Fang was born in China and entered ‘Iolani in the 9th grade as a Freeman Scholar, a program that grants four years of ‘Iolani tuition to students from Asia. On her application for admission, she wrote that she wanted to attend the school where Sun Yat-Sen studied.

There is also a photograph of old ‘Iolani School on display at the museum in Nanjing with the caption: “From 1879 to 1883, Dr. Sun received the western education successfully in Iolani School and Oahu College in Honolulu where his desire to reform his motherland was burgeoning. This is ‘Iolani.”

The trip then led students to Shanghai where they visited the residence where Sun Yat-Sen lived with Soong Ching Ling. They also toured the Shanghai University Film School and met with the dean and professors.

At a final dinner reception in Beijing, Otsuka and Kurokawa delivered a speech to about 30 guests living in Beijing with ties to Hawaii. ‘Iolani alumnus and attorney Russell Lee’75 coordinated the event.

“In Beijing, the ‘Iolani and Wai‘anae group met with Cunyu Wu, director general of the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation. Wu presented ‘Iolani Director of Institutional Advancement Jane Heimerdinger with a portrait of Sun Yat-Sen and Soong Ching Ling. Attorney Russell Lee ’75, right, coordinated a Beijing reception.

The trip concluded with a visit to the Great Wall.

“After overthrowing the Ching Dynasty, Sun Yat-Sen brought the people of China together under a single republic,” relayed Otsuka. “Even now, Sun Yat-Sen has brought ‘Iolani and Wai‘anae together through this documentary. We hope that through this film, we can awaken the Sun Yat-Sen in others, just as he has awakened inside each of us.”
Nearly 30 years ago, back in 1978, 'Iolani was the first Hawaii school to visit China when now retired Dean of Students William Lee ’53 led a tour of 37 students and 10 chaperones. Part of this group was also invited to meet Madame Soong Ching Ling in person.

“This was before diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China were established,” Lee said. “China was beginning to reach out to the outside world. But we had to prepare the students because the feeling was very anti-American in China.”

Lee recalls the People’s Liberation Army lining up and toting rifles at Loulu Bridge bordering Hong Kong and China. Barbed wire topped walls, and portraits of Mao Tse-Tung and other communist propaganda scenes were plastered in public places.

“I remember crossing the border, seeing the Red Guards, and thinking, ‘I hope we return,’” reminisced 'Iolani Director of Special Programs Ann Yoneshige, who was a young teacher and chaperone on the trip.

Of the larger group, four students and six chaperones were granted a 45-minute visit with Soong Ching Ling at her Beijing home on July 29 that year, according to a story in the Honolulu Advertiser. They were not allowed to take photographs. The students recited speeches in Mandarin and presented their distinguished hostess with gifts from Hawaii. In spite of her failing health, Soong Ching Ling welcomed the delegation from 'Iolani and honored the school from which her husband had graduated.

“It was an honor to go to China and to visit her,” said Earl Ching ’80, who was a junior in high school at the time and is now a member of the 'Iolani Board of Governors. “That visit has been the subject of a number of my children’s essays in school.”

Then China was different from the modern, more westernized country of today. Ching remembered that doors had no locks, and people could only drink plain bottled orange soda or water that had been sterilized by boiling. The communist guards watched them carefully, even confiscating a camera and film from one student who took pictures at a train station. There were few cars and countless bicycles on the roads.

“When I tell people I was there in ’78, they look at me like, ‘what?’” said Mel Kaneshige ’66, who was then a young attorney on the trip. “Before then, I never thought I’d have a chance to see the historical places I had read about.”

'Iolani has long recognized the significance of China in its curriculum. The school first offered Mandarin to students in the 1960s. Today, more than 120 high school students are enrolled in Mandarin, which is taught by two full time teachers.

Mandarin courses have also been available through 'Iolani’s after school program for Lower School children, as well as through summer school for Upper School students. Last summer a new, popular course was “Chinese Language and Culture.”

Since the first student tour to China in 1978, several others have been made by 'Iolani student groups, including recent summer trips sponsored by the Freeman Foundation.

Reaching beyond campus borders, 'Iolani last year published a set of beginning Mandarin language text books written by Thomas Tze-yi Chao, who taught at 'Iolani for 29 years. Other schools have already purchased these books for their students, and Chao recently completed a second level of the books which comes with two compact discs.

“Since 1978, there’s definitely an increased interest in learning Mandarin because of China’s growing prominence in the world,” said ‘Iolani Director of Special Programs Ann Yoneshige.
Last month, the 'Iolani School celebrated the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, former president of the Republic of China.

**The Big Three**

The rapid changes in China are revealed in this story told by Jerry Mao, a tour guide in Beijing with the China Travel Service.

Mao told the 'Iolani and Wasanae students that, according to Chinese culture and society, before his father was allowed to marry he had to have the “Big Three” first. These three were a watch, a sewing machine, and a bike.

But when his father’s younger brother got married, the Big Three had changed just as the country around them was becoming more modern and western. The Big Three became a television, a refrigerator, and a washing machine.

Now Mao, who is in his late 20s, wants to get married to his sweetheart. But before he can settle down, he must accumulate the new “Big Two” which are a car and an apartment.