

Hawaii's Duchess Recalls 'Star'

Twenty-three years ago that glamorous lady of the stage, the late Gertrude Lawrence, starred on many military camp stages around Oahu in "Blithe Spirit." Kamaainas may remember her performances, or recall having seen the famous Gertrude sunning on the beach at the former Outrigger Canoe Club next to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Surfers remember her riding tandem on the waves with the late Duke Kahanamoku.

Interest in Gertrude Lawrence is mounting around town these days as the Hawaii Heart Association prepares a benefit premiere of the story of her life in the movie, "Star," opening Dec. 19 at the Varsity Theatre. Julie Andrews will play the lead role in the film.

While some Islanders may recall Gertrude's visit here in 1945, Duke's widow, Nadine Kahanamoku, has memories that go much further back. Being the gracious lady that she is, Nadine was hesitant to put her finger on the exact date she met "Gee," a pet name friends called Gertrude.



Gertrude, photographed by Honolulu Marjorie Trumbull in San Francisco in early '50s.

Call Me 'Gee'

"She hated being called Gertie, so we called her Gee," Nadine explained.

"Let's just say we met in the '30s," she continued in her familiar soft-spoken manner.

"I met Gee on a double date in London. I'll never forget it. We dated two princes from India. They were brothers. I don't know what happened to the princes, but Gee and I hit it off and we became fast friends.

Nancy Harlocker's DATE BOOK



"We didn't see a lot of each other because Gee was often on tour, but when she was in London, we had some pretty grand times. She was so much fun, had a marvelous sense of humor and loved parties. I remember visiting her London flat. Everything was white — the furniture, carpets, even the piano — which was pretty unusual in those days.

"She was always well-dressed, wearing simple, smart clothes made for her by noted London designers, Capt. Molyneux and Norman Hatnell."

Sails for Hawaii

Nadine later moved to New York and in 1938 found her way to Hawaii. "I will have been here 30 years Dec. 28. I came on the Lurline Christmas cruise to teach ballroom dancing at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, but I always tell people I came here to teach the missionaries how to dance," she said, naming some prominent kamaainas. "They're all gone now," she added regretfully.

Duke and Nadine were married in 1940.

"Gertrude and I never crossed paths after I left London until she came here to play in 'Blithe Spirit' during the war. I was secretary to the commanding officer of Special Services then and Gee was with the USO."

Thumbing through her beautifully-kept scrapbooks, Nadine showed us delightful pictures taken of Gertrude during her visit here. She also brought out a book, "Gertrude Lawrence as Mrs. A" written by Gertrude's former husband, Richard Stoddard Aldrich . . . and finally her most prized possession — Gertrude's own autobiography, "A Star Danced." It is warmly autographed to Nadine by Gee, as are some of Nadine's other precious photographs of the star. Unfortunately, Nadine's pictures are too faded to produce here.

Recalling Gertrude's few weeks during her only visit in Hawaii, Nadine said, "We didn't do much partying because Gee was working and it was still wartime. But I do remember one party given by a commanding general. Gee didn't have any formal clothes with her, so I loaned her my black dress with fringe on it. We were exactly the same size. She loved it and wanted to buy it, but I wouldn't part with it. I still have a letter she wrote asking me to bring it along on a trip we were planning to New York."

Nadine last saw Gertrude in New York in 1952. "She was quite ill then, though we didn't know it. We saw her in 'The King and I,' but she wasn't going out at all. Duke and



Advertiser Photo by Leland Cheong

Nadine Kahanamoku reviews pictures of the late Gertrude Lawrence taken at Waikiki.

I were houseguests of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, who invited Gertrude to a party for us but she didn't come."

Gertrude died the same year of hepatitis.

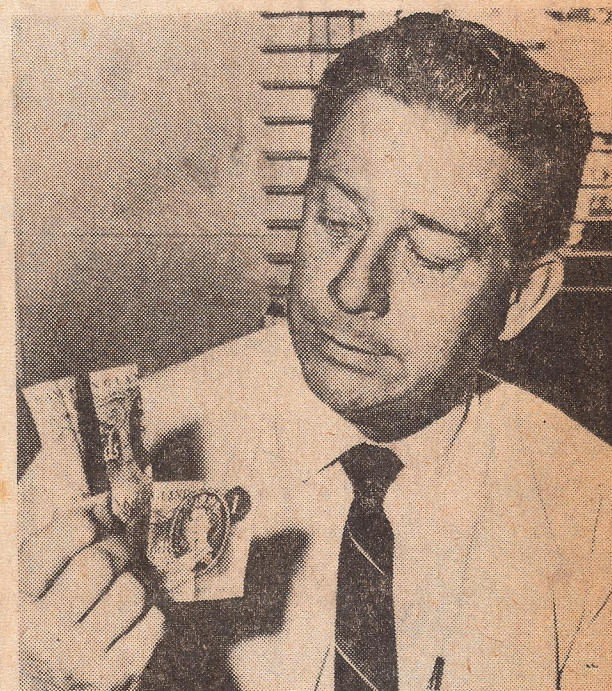
Fondest Memory

Probably the fondest memory recalled by Nadine is recorded in Aldrich's book.

When Gertrude was in Hawaii she told a fellow actor, John Hoysradt (who's since changed his name to Hoyt) that she knew two couples here — the Walter Dillinghams and the Duke and Duchess of Kahanamoku.

According to Aldrich, Gertrude boasted to John, "My old friend Nadine Alexander is married to a Polynesian nobleman." Nadine smiled when she said she had to explain that Duke was a name — just like Earl.

"Titles weren't really important to Gee," Nadine said. "She was simply displaying her great sense of humor."



BACK FROM WRONG-WAY TRIP — Thad Ekstrand displays British currency he saved as souvenirs of an unscheduled detour.

Those British have lots of aloha

"I'm not the first, and I won't be the last," said Thad Ekstrand as he recounted his wrong-way adventure.

Ekstrand boarded a flight for Honolulu (he thought) Sunday in San Francisco and got off the Pan American jet in London.

"NO, I'VE NEVER BEEN IN LONDON before. I loved it, it's a wonderful town," he said today.

Ekstrand, Hawaii sales manager for the National Biscuit Co., was just settled into his seat after taking off from San Francisco when he heard the pilot tell the passengers to look out their window at beautiful Lake Tahoe.

This puzzled Ekstrand because a Honolulu-bound traveler at about that point would be told to gaze at the beautiful Farallon Islands.

"I called a stewardess and asked her what flight I was on," Ekstrand said.

"Why the one for London, sir?"
"Pan American was very nice about it. The pilot offered to turn back if I had urgent business in Honolulu. I told him I didn't," he said.

Ekstrand was wearing his Outrigger Canoe Club blazer, a turtle-neck shirt and a pair of slacks. His luggage was en route to Honolulu and he had no passport and no visa.

Pan American bought him a dress shirt in London and smoothed the clearance procedures. He was back in Honolulu Tuesday at no extra charge.

As he left the jet in London, the stewardesses decorated him with a vanda lei.

While in London, Ekstrand saw the play "Fiddler on the Roof."

"I DON'T KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED, they just put me on the wrong plane. I'm not the first, and I won't be the last.

"I understand the Honolulu flight was delayed and there was a no show on the London flight that sort of fitted into the seat I took.

"It was a one-in-a-million chance. Maybe the airline clerks see too many numbers in one day.

"But the airline was very kind, and I really wasn't inconvenienced," he said.



OUT NIU VALLEY WAY

By Charlotte Coen

At last, the radio stations are starting to play the Christmas songs. I love to hear them. They really put you in that "get-going mood." There's no time for procrastinating now, it's go-go-go. Those Christmas Gifts for the Mainland and elsewhere should be well on their merry way and I guess Uncle Sammy would be mighty happy to have all those Christmas cards and special greetings to friends on their way also. I hope you're not like I am, one of the laggards, Last Minute Suzie, that's me.

The Niu Nieves have changed their annual Christmas dinner party to December 10 at the Outrigger Canoe Club instead of December 18 at the Oahu Country Club. So many of the members wouldn't be able to attend on the eighteenth and it is also Doctor and Erna Sloan's wedding anniversary. We went to the Outrigger last Christmas and we really had a wonderful evening. So, I guess all the Niu Nieves are looking forward to it again. And this is when we reveal our Secret Pals. Just don't think I can wait any longer, the suspense is killing me by inches.