

Aloha Fawn

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Fawn Whittaker, Director of the Language Center at BYU-Hawaii, passed away January after a long battle with cancer. Among other professional activities that IALL members will remember Fawn for is CATS (Computer Assistance for Teachers and Students), the FileMaker Pro-based program she developed for language lab inventory, record keeping, and automatic time-keeping of lab usage. But Fawn will be remembered by all who ever met her for something much more important -- for her gentle, caring and nurturing approach to life, and to every individual she interacted with. Soft-spoken and always focused on the needs of others, many who knew her were not aware that she had battled disease for years.

Fawn spent her breaks and summers in the South Pacific -- particularly on the island of Kiribati, where her adopted daughter Rosalee was born -- working, teaching, translating and learning new languages. Fawn studied a dozen languages in her lifetime in order to communicate with people in their own tongue, and published an English translation of *Aia Karaki Nikawai I-Tungaru* (Myths and legends in Tungaru) an early work in Gilbertese.

Fawn lived a simple life, the simplicity of which was strikingly brought to my attention when I visited with her for a weekend several years ago. She showed me a fish net that she had (I forget now whether she had made it or bought it, but it wouldn't surprise me if she had made it). She said that until recently, she had borrowed others' fishing nets when she was in Kiribati, for meals there were the result of catching one's own rations. Now, she told me, she would no longer have to impose on others to do her daily "shopping". This net was one of her treasures. Her music was another. In her tiny one-room apartment loomed a seemingly huge organ. Music was dear to her. She told me stories of the 2-hours-each-way weekly drives her father would make to take her to music lessons in the sparsely populated outreaches of Idaho when she was a child. She had also taught herself to play the accordion, the guitar, the ukulele, the Chinese zither and the harpsichord.

Fawn's daughter Rosalee -- who many IALL members had the opportunity to meet at IALL '95 at Notre Dame -- was the greatest treasure in her life. In addition to Rosalee, Fawn is survived by her parents, Calvin and Carol Whittaker. In Hawai'ian, "aloha" is both

In Memoriam: Fawn Whittaker

a greeting of meeting and of departure, but not necessarily a “hello” and a “goodbye”. It’s more like a “hello” and a “see you later”. To Fawn, who always started and ended her calls and emails with “aloha”, I say, “until we see you again”. ◆

Photo used courtesy of Ke Alaka'i student newspaper, BYU-Hawaii.