

# ID

## PROJECT

### MUSEUM SEES GREAT RESPONSE TO PIERCE PHOTOS

Story by COLIN M. STEWART  
Tribune-Herald staff writer

#### Notable numbers

**23**

The number of photos from the John Howard Pierce Photograph Collection that have been printed in the Hawaii Tribune-Herald.

**300**

The approximate number of responses via phone, email and drop-in the Lyman Museum has gotten about those printed photos.

**F**or anyone who was living on Hawaii Island in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, it is an opportunity to see faces, places and events they might not have seen or thought about in almost half a century.

For the young, it's a launching point — a chance to open up a dialogue with friends and family about history, community and their own sense of place and time.

The John Howard Pierce Photograph Collection at the

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Lyman Museum in Hilo is a treasure trove of nearly 50,000 images taken by Pierce during his time as a photographer with the Hawaii Tribune-Herald.

And for the last year or so, an archivist with the museum, Miki Bulos, has worked to catalogue the photos and identify the people, places and events in them.

The Tribune-Herald has regularly printed images in its Community section and asked for the public to provide its input into the project, and so far the response has been nearly overwhelming, Bulos said.

"It's a conservative estimate, but I would say we have had about 300 people call in on the photos in the paper," she said.

Of the initial 700 photographs presented to the community, either through the newspaper, or through the exhibit and special photo ID days hosted at the museum, more than 400 pictures were identified, at least partially, she said.

Area residents might recognize themselves, friends, family members or former coworkers in the photos, and when they share that information with the ID project, the results can pay serious dividends. Almost like a snowball, a small piece of information can lead Bulos and others to reach new people and sources of information that can contribute ever-greater pieces of information.

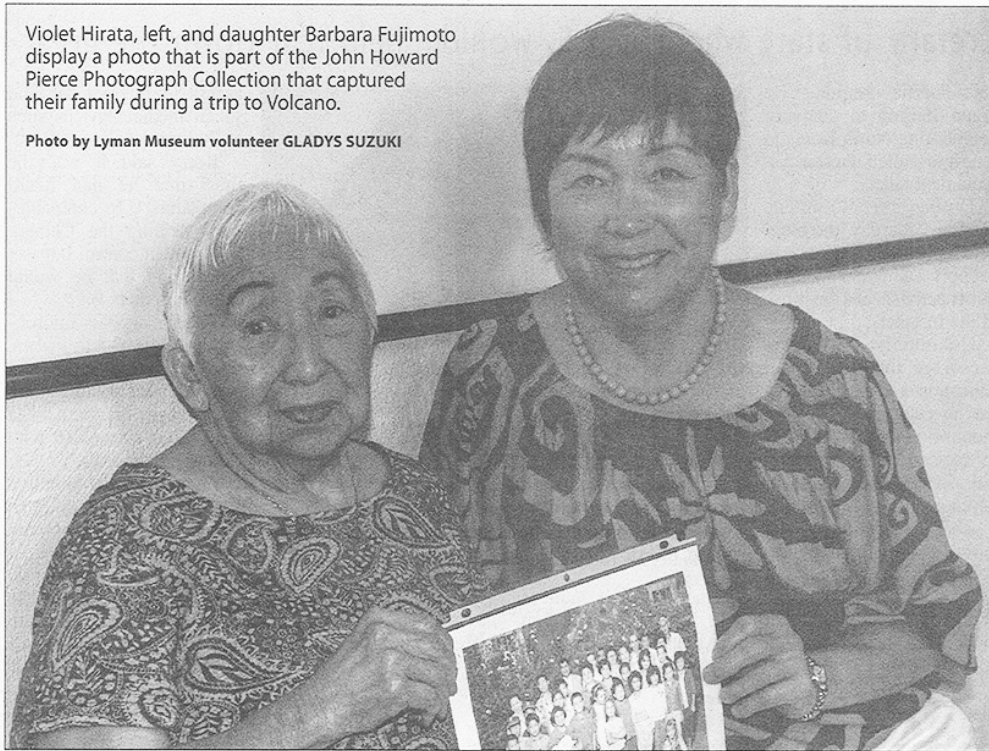
"Our goal is to find out everything we can about these photos," Bulos said. "It's important. This is our community and its history."

The timing is right for the project, she added, because many of the people in the photos are of the age where they unfortunately might not be around much longer to help and share their knowledge. For instance, a woman named Julita Casil recently called to identify her husband, Alfredo, who was playing saxophone in a band depicted in one of the photos. He passed away a few months prior.

Barbara Fujimoto said she and her mother, Violet Hirata, were thrilled to be able to dig through the archives and find photos of themselves, as well as friends and family. One Saturday, they visited Bulos at the museum and found a picture of

Violet Hirata, left, and daughter Barbara Fujimoto display a photo that is part of the John Howard Pierce Photograph Collection that captured their family during a trip to Volcano.

Photo by Lyman Museum volunteer GLADYS SUZUKI



their family during a 4-H trip to Volcano.

"It was a picture of all of the 4-Hers and our parents. I'm there in the front row with my brother and sister," she said. "I didn't even remember being in that photo. It was in Volcano behind Kilauaea Lodge. I had so much fun talking to my Mom about the family camp there. That photo made us start talking about our childhood and what we did together. I didn't even realize how involved she (Hirata) was with 4-H."

While looking at the photographs and identifying the people and places in them is fun, Fujimoto added the best part of the experience might be in sharing the experience with friends, family and other community members.

"I took my mother over to the photo ID day, and she got to see people she hadn't seen in a while. She got to see some of the people from 4-H. It became like a reunion. We all got together, and thumbed through pictures. People were saying 'Look at that!' It was so exciting. ... I loved seeing other people getting so excited. And I learned about things I never knew. I didn't even know about Hawaiian Village in Keaukaha. ...

"It just brings back how important it is to talk about our history. It starts a conversation."

Hawaii Community College history student Keala Arquero agreed. In comments to Bulos, Arquero said viewing and talking about the photographs helped her learn more about her family in general.

"It is as if finding out more and more about my grandparents helps complete me and connect me to my past. ... I

feel like I found a missing piece," she said.

For Bulos, a relative newcomer to the Big Isle, the most affecting information to come out of the project so far was the identification of a Filipino man, Felix Calibosa, who was pictured with his companions on the beach in Honokohau.

Being of Filipino heritage herself, Bulos said

"Each photo gets deeper and deeper, the more people contribute to its description. ... Each picture has a story to tell, and those stories will stop your heart."

Miki Bulos

Lyman Museum archivist

she was fascinated to learn about the small group of men, who had been forced into retirement from the sugar plantations, and with nowhere to turn they set up their own little community, living using

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traditional Hawaiian methods to survive. Calibosa even built his own shack out of driftwood.

"I knew about the immigration history. But I didn't know what happened to them after they got retired out of sugar. They were resilient. They found a life here in Honokohau. They survived here and took on roles as caretakers of the area, and of Hawaiian culture and traditions. ... (One man) said he would go there on weekends and they taught him to throw-net fish. They were stewarding the land and handing down the culture. They could have just wallowed in their abandonment, but instead they got engaged," she said.

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contribute to its description. ... Each picture has a story to tell, and those stories will stop your heart."

To help with the photo ID project, or find out more information about the exhibit, contact Miki Bulos at (808) 935-5021 (once message begins, press 5). More photos are also available at the museum's website — [lymanmuseum.org](http://lymanmuseum.org) — on the Pierce Photo ID page.

The museum also hosted five photo ID events since the exhibit began, and two more are scheduled — Saturday, April 26, and Saturday, June 28 — which will mark the close of the Pierce exhibit.

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### Discover more

• Read this story online at [www.hawaiitribune-herald.com](http://www.hawaiitribune-herald.com) to find a list of information, as provided by Lyman Museum archivist Miki Bulos, collected as a result of the Pierce Collection photos being printed in the Tribune-Herald's Community section since late July 2013. And don't forget to check out the Community section each Saturday for more photos from the Pierce Collection.

