J. ELLIOTT CAMERON REMARKS AT HAWAII PACIFIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING
April 10, 1982

Aloha
Welcome

I arrived at this campus the evening before this meeting in 1980. My first official act was to greet you. I am most pleased to be invited back this year.

I do not have great words of wisdom to impart this morning. "The older I grow the more interest and concern I have about history.

Homer, the blind Greek poet who lived nine centuries B.C., wrote two great literary masterpieces. One is called "The Iliad." It is the story of the ten-year battle of Ilium or Troy. The other is called "The Odyssey." It has to do with the experiences of Odysseus, sometimes called Ulysses, during the ten years he and his soldiers required to traverse the 300 miles of island-dotted sea between the battleground of Troy and his home island of Ithaca near Greece.

The Odyssey is 11,000 lines long. Several centuries after it was written, Aristotle wrote a digest of it which was only 79 words in length. It follows:

"A certain man is away from home for a number of years, being closely watched by Poseidon and stripped of all his companions, while his affairs are in such shape that his money is being squandered by wowers of his wife, and his son is being plotted against. After being shipwrecked by a storm, he arrives home, making himself known to some, and attacks the wooers, with the result that he is saved and his enemies destroyed."

"That," says Aristotle, "is the real story of the Odyssey. All of the rest of the story is merely episodes." But what an exciting array of episodes they are, and how thrillingly Homer tells about them. (Quoted from Sterling W. Sill)

As Aristotle did, we might write the record of our own lives in 79 words, but, although the story may be real, the episodes would not lend meaning to the words. A schoolboy once wrote the biography of Benjamin Franklin in these words "He was born in Boston, walked to Philadelphia, got married and discovered electricity." Franklin, however, probably had about as many episodes in his life as are found in "The Odyssey.

The episodes of our lives are those experiences that give life its color, interest, purpose, joy, and reward. We also have lots of episodes which we obtain through reading, discovering, living, suffering, enjoying, and just being. One such episode has been recorded as follows:

"I've never been to Switzerland, but I'm told that the following prophecy was made by Lucius Gratus, a Catholic priest, in 1729 A.D. This, along with some of his other words, may be found in the University Library at Basel, Switzerland. It was copied for us by Samuel B. Bringhurst while he was on a mission there in 1910. "The old-time Gospel, and the gifts thereof, are lost, false Doctrines prevail in every church in the world. All we can do is to exhort people to be just and fear God, shun evil and pray. Prayer and purity may cause an angel to visit a deep and depressed soul. But I tell you, in a hundred years, God will have spoken.

"I see a little band of people, led by a prophet and faithful Elders -- persecuted, burned and murdered, but in a valley that lies on the shores of a great lake, they will grow and make a beautiful land, having a temple of magnificent splendor, and they will also possess the priesthood of old, -- having teachers, deacons, etc.

"From every nation will the believers be gathered, by speedy messengers, and then will God Almighty speak to the disobedient with thunder and lightning and destruction such as has never been heard of in history before."

(HVU Interhousing Bulletin, 1964): You, who are here today to present papers will have obtained information from others who have recorded episodes. I would hope that each of us is recording information which might be used to enhance the work of future historians.
Robert Louis Stevenson said that everyone should always carry with him at least two books. He should have one book to read from, and another book to write in, as our two biggest problems probably come from not understanding and not remembering. This problem is so great that God himself seems to have given it a great deal of attention. Whenever nations have gone without scriptures for very long their faith and righteousness have soon slipped away. One of the great tragedies of our lives is that scriptures sit on shelves unopened when the Lord has said: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. 6:6-7)

Today those of you who will present papers have already had a growing experience through preparation. Those of us who listen will have grown because you are willing to share.

Again, welcome to PU-Hawaii; may your day be one of long remembrance.