

Special

AN ARCHITECT HERO

Ernest Hideo Hara, FAIA

Hawaii's Distinguished Architect and Diplomat

by Andrew Charles Yanoviak, AIA

At 92, Ernest Hideo Hara, FAIA, recent recipient of the Leslie N. Boney Jr., FAIA, Fellowship Award from the AIA College of Fellows, still has the twinkle in his eye and fire in his belly of a very dedicated and graceful diplomat-architect. He has not only created numerous award-winning works of architecture in his native Hawaii, but he has also very carefully built inspired bridges connecting people with people—and nations with nations—regardless of social or financial status, race, or ethnicity.

“Ernie” has been well recognized by U.S. and foreign governments for his outstanding humanitarian achievements in serving on dozens of institutional, corporate, and government boards of directors for decades. Right now, for instance, he is very much looking forward to participating in the upcoming Japan Institute of Architects (JIA) convention in October, joining with fellow architects who also have bestowed honors on him. What’s his secret to diplomatic success? Well, he says, many of the neighborhood friends with whom he played and went to school as a child ascended to become heads of global corporations and world renowned educational and financial institutions and occupy important local, national, and international government leadership positions.

Affable and accessible

Distinguished architect-diplomat Hara has always been affable, and accessible to aspiring youth seeking scholarships, fellowships, foreign-exchange study, and travel-abroad programs—as well as to his architecture clients, fellow AIA architects, and worldwide dignitaries. He attended the University of Hawaii College of Engineering during the Great Depression and graduated from the University of Southern California with a BArch degree. In addition to his licenses to practice architecture, he earned much earlier in his career a journeyman’s plumbers’ license. In fact, one entered his very first architecture office through his father Kaichi’s plumbing contractor’s shop.

Almost 45 years ago, prior to statehood, Hawaii Territorial Governor William Quinn appointed Hara to his Commission

on Accessibility for the Handicapped in the commission’s infancy. As a former experienced plumber and well recognized architect-diplomat, he played a leading role on the commission and subsequently was selected to serve on the Governor’s Arts Commission. This was all in addition to his AIA voluntary service—as chapter president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, director and chair of numerous committees and task forces—and work as NCARB director and Hawaii State Licensing Board chair, vice chair, and secretary.



HARA

Best achievement

In 1995, the University of Hawaii School of Architecture created the Ernest H. Hara, FAIA, Distinguished Professional Service Award, and Ernie was its very first recipient. He was also involved in the design of the UH School of Architecture with his son John M. Hara, FAIA, and the late Dennis T. Toyomura, FAIA.

In response to the typical “Charlie Rose” question, “Looking back over your entire life, what do you consider your greatest and most worthwhile achievement?,” Ernie reflected a while before responding in his typical humble yet proud and dignified manner. He said, “You know, there aren’t too many father-and-son FAIAs in the nation. And besides, John has received numerous design honor awards. Furthermore, he added, “when my parents were

married in 1900 in Hilo [on the Big Island of Hawaii], their marriage certificate was written in the Hawaiian language.”

That’s typical ‘Ernie’ ... still building bridges and organizational communications networks within the sphere of global communities and space-time architectural and humanitarian relationships! What more noble cause for Hawaii’s Distinguished Diplomat-Architect?

Andrew Yanoviak is proprietor of his eponymous firm in Honolulu. He has been active in the AIA, specifically in the building codes arena, for decades.

Who is your architect hero? Tell us in your own words, and let us share it with the profession. Send the story, with a subject line of “architect hero,” to Managing Editor Stephanie Stubbs, sstubbs@aia.org. 