

# MAUI INC.



**Evolution of  
an Airport**  
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# Evolution of an Airport





## A facility that just "grew like Topsy" keeps on expanding



STITH HILLS



Far left, digger and shovel bite into the ground where new facilities will be built at Kahului Airport. Above, control tower is the airport's heartbeat, and may grow busier in the future. Left, radar operator watches traffic; note Maui outline on operator's screen.

By Scott C.S. Stone

**A**long about now the State of Hawaii will be considering the possibility of constructing a parallel runway at Kahului Airport, one that could accommodate wide-bodied jets flown by overseas carriers.

It is a plan that goes beyond the current airport extension project, and while the expansion is funded and underway, the parallel runway is simply a part of the State's exploratory master-planning for airports.

Nevertheless, the concept has physical and political ramifications, and if the State decides to go ahead with a parallel runway, there could be local opposition.

In the view of Owen Miyamoto, Airports Administrator for the State, another runway at Kahului would "solve a lot of

our noise problems and also handle our future capacity requirements."

There are two runways at Kahului Airport now—the primary one, runway 2-20, 7,000 feet long; and the secondary one, runway 5-23, 5,000 feet long. Both are 150 feet wide. The secondary 5-23, is unable to handle large jets although the inter-Island carriers do land there on occasion.

Extension of 5-23, according to Miyamoto, "is not in the cards. It goes up to Kanaha Pond, which is a bird sanctuary, and it has a severe noise impact on the Spreckelsville area. Our preferred alternative would be to build a parallel runway."

Miyamoto said, "We've started the studies and they will include looking into the alternatives of runway config-

uration. That's something we'll be doing this year.

"People have proposed a terminal on the opposite side of the field but we found it would cost more because of soil conditions. A terminal like this requires grading down to certain levels. We can build a runway more economically because it generally follows the terrain.

"We'll make the decision on whether to build a parallel runway or not based on new forecasts, including the volume of passengers and the interests of overseas carriers. We've no idea yet what it would cost; that depends on soil conditions and alignment."

Miyamoto said the runway could be on the Paia side of the field. "We're not forecasting a lot of night operations and





JOHN HILLS

*Like futuristic sails, jet aircraft tails are etched against Maui's sky, symbolic of the airlines that link Maui with the world. Below, a study in arrivals and departures.*



we try to encourage day operations by overseas carriers.”

Miyamoto stressed that additional construction at Kahului Airport would follow the demands placed on the airport's systems by increasing tourism.

“We recognize that Maui is a world-class destination area,” he said. “There's no way we can avoid what potentially could be done in Maui in the visitor industry. If the upgrading continues, it's our responsibility to make sure that transportation facilities are provided as needed.”

Miyamoto noted that previous forecasts of traffic volume have fallen short of reality. In 1982 it was forecast that by the year 2,000 there would be 3.8 million people departing from Kahului Airport, more than doubling the rate at that time. That forecast already has been reached.

Meanwhile, airport expansion has gotten underway and will be done in three phases, what Kahului Airport Manager Tom Hanchett calls “a game of checkers.” It's likely to cause some problems, he says:

“Anytime you build in the same location where you're operating it causes problems, not only for us and for the contractor, but for the traveling public.”

The construction will focus first on building what Hanchett calls the Paia holding area, seven specially-constructed trailers—“I'll defy anyone to know they are trailers”—with five departure gates and a covered walkway to the holding room. Hanchett says this will give the airport additional space until the new terminal is finished.

Across the field, construction will center on utilities, roads and fencing for nine 10,000-square-foot lots to be leased to helicopter operators who will construct their own hangars based on State design requirements. The lots will be leased to operators on a 10-year lease for \$3,252 per year annual lease rent, with a second 10-year period negotiable, or on a 20-year lease basis. The airport will expect a minimum investment of \$100,000 from each helicopter operator.

In time there will be clearance of the present commuter terminal so a new ramp and the first two holding rooms of the new terminal can be built. This will be followed by construction of a new ramp area, covering the ditch that runs through a portion of the airport and building new holding rooms in that area.

“At that point,” Hanchett says, “we'll slide everybody over to the northeast and improve the south ramp, on the Kahului side. Then we have to split our operations and repair and resurface the center portion...” leading eventually to putting in the base course and resurfacing to hold heavier aircraft.

No runway work is scheduled at present, Hanchett says.

Upgrading of the airport has been in



# Opinions Vary on Airport Aesthetics

The jury is still out on the airport's aesthetic qualities, and it's a question that probably won't be resolved until the public sees the results of the Kahului Airport expansion.

The official body that passes on the quality of design has given the expansion program its own seal of approval. Some in the visitor industry have doubts about the aesthetics, and visitors surveyed in a random sampling by MAUI INC. feel that just about any change to the present facility will be an improvement.

Among several people in the visitor industry expressing doubts, Hyatt Regency Hotel manager Bill Rhodes summed up by saying, "I don't know that there's wide-spread concern about the quality of the airport, but in my personal opinion I don't think the design and furnishings make the statement of quality that Maui needs to make in the tourism arena.

"That's more of a personal opinion and it's based on what I've seen that they've done so far, not on projections. I *do* think we should be concerned that the airport will be maxed out by the time it's finished."

Meanwhile, the County-appointed seven-member group that makes recommendations to the Planning Commission on design quality has approved the airport's design and aesthetic planning. The Urban Design Review Board gave its approval last September 11, and the Planning Commission followed with its own permit regarding airport construction.

The Urban Design Review Board is composed of architects, planners and interested persons, appointed by the Mayor and approved by the County Council. Members generally serve staggered five-year terms. Members active at the time of the Kahului Airport expansion approval were Warren Suzuki, Gerald Hiyakumoto, Russ Riley, Susan Campos, Warren Mitsui, Edward Bringuel and Catherine Asami. The Board is supported by a staff of 14, according to Clyde Murashige, a staff member.

Murashige said plans for the air-

port's expansion more than met the requirements the County has for landscaping.

"They haven't specified a cost (for landscaping) but there will be a lot more than you see now. Basically their landscaping will be in three areas: along the access road, with shrubs and trees; in and around the parking lot with flowering trees and shrubs; and within the terminal in large planter boxes.

"The County's requirements were only for the parking lot. We're really pleased that they've gone beyond that.

"They've also designed the building to really capture the character of Maui, of the Islands. The terminal design emphasizes the use of wind for cooling, and there's a sort of pitched roof. The look of it all is Hawaiian."

That's the look missing from the current facility, in the view of many of the visitors expressing opinions to MAUI INC. in a random survey at the airport.

"This place," said one visitor, gesturing around the terminal facility, "could be some rinky-dink airport in Ohio. I know; I'm *from* Ohio."

Another visitor deplored the lack of more obvious Hawaiian decor. "Where are all the flowers?" she asked. "There should be more flowers here."

Most visitors felt the Kahului terminal area operated efficiently enough for its size. What they missed was what one of them called, "a little more Hawaiian stuff," and added, "we didn't come all this way to look at what we could see at home."

A couple of repeat visitors to Maui felt there might be "a little more crowding this time," but had no quarrel with the airport. When told there was to be an expansion of the facilities, their only comment was, "don't get too big."

The consensus among the visitors seemed to be that expansion probably would be an improvement—provided it made the facility look more Hawaiian.

the talking stage for years. Hanchett said that local aircraft traffic was reason enough to begin the expansion project, and when United Air Lines began direct flights to Maui it more or less made expansion mandatory. United alone is flying two DC-10s and six DC-8s daily into Kahului.

"Nobody is saying the present plan is the best one. It's not perfect and we know that when it's finished we'll still be a bit crowded. It's a plan fully intended to be added to."

Miyamoto echoed Hanchett's contention that additional expansion is possible beyond the present work:

"There's been a lot of talk about the airport being obsolete when it's finished, and I think part of it has been attributed to what I said. I said—and it's probably misconstrued—that after a certain time the terminal building being planned would become saturated and would have to be expanded. We deliberately do this. We don't try to build any more than we can reasonably forecast, and what we actually need.

"So that say five or ten years from now there's a need for international facilities, then we'll be faced with modifying the building or expanding it.

"Say that rather than four overseas carriers talking about serving Kahului it doubles to eight—then the building is obsolete. There's not enough room for eight overseas carriers, so we'd have to expand the ticket lobby, build additional gates and so forth."

If this were to happen in the middle of current expansion plans, Miyamoto said, the present design could be altered.

Aircraft operations normally are restricted by the amount of air space and runway capacity, Miyamoto said, but this was not the case at Kahului. He said that if the airport were to be able to build sufficient ramp space the airport could easily take the forecast traffic and not be saturated:

"The present restriction is on the number of parking positions of aircraft."

Currently there are parking spots on the ramp for 12 aircraft, with two back-up parking areas. Hanchett said current plans still called for 14 parking spots, with some possibility of double-parking. He said it might be possible to go up to 20 parked aircraft by parking them behind each other.

A consideration is the arrival time of jet aircraft. "We're saying, in effect, that we can't take any more wide-bodied jets from 9 in the morning to 7 o'clock at night," Hanchett said. He is scheduled to retire this year, Hanchett said, and observed, "My personal feeling is that I hope I never see a 747 on Maui, but it may happen."

Once Maui started getting overseas traffic, Hanchett said, "the airport just



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grew like Topsy." In 1966 the airport handled 629,700 passengers; in 1969 the number was 1,069,700; in 1974, 2 million; in 1980, 3 million; in 1984, 4,077,000; and last year an estimated 4,300,000.

**"Nobody is saying the present plan is the best one . . . it's a plan fully intended to be added to."**

Both Miyamoto and Hanchett dismissed Puunene as a primary airport site for Maui, an idea advocated by engineer Stephen Pitt and others in the community.

"We're not going to close our minds and tell Mr. Pitt he's wrong, don't bother us. We've looked at his plans. And our current plans don't mean that the Department of Transportation might not take another look at it, just to reaffirm its opinions and decisions," Hanchett said.

"There are many, many drawbacks to Puunene. In my opinion you'd have to start from scratch. I'd say it would take us five years, minimum, to go through all the environmental problems, the land use, the Planning Commission, the public hearings . . . and at least \$500 million to build a new airport from scratch. I personally feel an airport at Puunene would never be approved."

Miyamoto said that Puunene "has been suggested several times . . . that it would replace both Kahului and West Maui airport sites. I don't think that's practical at all, even though conceptually *continued on page 22*

**By the time the Kahului Airport expansion is finished it will have cost almost \$70 million, according to State officials.**

First estimates, compiled in November, 1984, have had an escalation built into them by State planners so that the final construction figure, applicable at the time of construction, adds up to an airport expansion cost of \$67,986,000.

The three-phase construction costs are as follows:

Phase I - airport hardstand, access roads and parking, and a new terminal building; \$33,046,000.

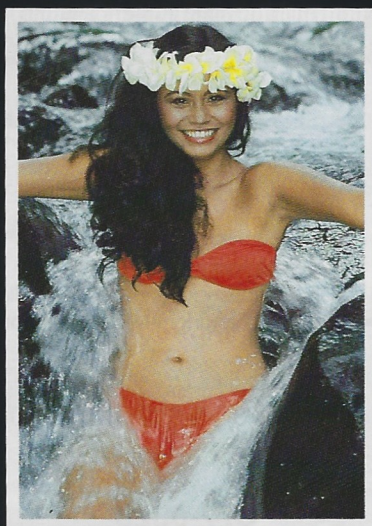
Phase II - aircraft hardstand, access roads and parking, new terminal building; \$15,665,000.

Phase II - access roads and parking, new terminal building; \$19,275,000.

If construction goes according to plan, the completed airport will be dedicated in appropriate ceremonies on December 1, 1990.



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it sounds like a good idea to have one airport serving Maui.

"Maui is faced with a serious problem of access between Lahaina and Central Maui. Regardless whether the airport is at Puunene or at Kahului, there's a real bottleneck. Puunene isn't much closer and unless you improve the highway you're not going to make the airport more accessible. Another problem is noise. The cost would be substantial, starting from scratch. The environmental impact statements alone would take so much time, and you can imagine what the people of Kihei would say about the airport close by; they wouldn't hold still for it. At least at Kahului the takeoff path is over water. It's better to stay with that."

Both Miyamoto and Hanchett said the issue of an airport in West Maui—Mahinahina or elsewhere—had no bearing on the plans for Kahului Airport.

"My personal view is that Maui needs a second airport . . . and in our master plan we'd make whatever adjustments are necessary if that were to come about," Miyamoto said.

Miyamoto said that all environmental impact statements covering current expansion at Kahului were completed, but if there is any additional construction of a major nature—such as a parallel runway, or extension or any runway—"you create a higher level of service that would require a new environmental impact statement."

The present construction project, Miyamoto says, should result in a distinctive Hawaiian style for the airport. The work will reflect the architectural design of Honolulu-based Sam Chang, and be supervised by Project Managers, Hawaii. Two Maui firms—R.T. Tanaka Engineers, Inc., and Norman Saito Engineering Consultants, Inc.—have provided what Miyamoto calls "very useful knowledge."

In general the Department of Transportation relies on consultants, and in this project will delegate on-site inspection as work progresses to Project Managers, Hawaii. All of the design and consulting work, in addition to construction, was by negotiated contract instead of being put out to bid. Miyamoto said this was because of the DOT's familiarity of the capabilities of the firms involved, and their past experience.

"We're putting all our attention on this site," Hanchett said, "and we've got to get going because we've got the traffic . . . my real concern is—is this space where we want it? Is that space where we want it?—because the prime job of an airport is to move people and baggage through the airport as expeditiously and safely as possible.

"Then you add to that all the gift

shops, lei stands, taxis and other services."

Miyamoto noted the expansion will result in an airport with good security control, brought about primarily by having people pass through a single security check station.

"That serves another practical purpose from our standpoint, and that is, we must generate all the revenues to pay for these improvements, so we make this as money-making as possible. Quite frankly, we go out and try to make as much money from our concessions as we can, so we concentrate the concessions and shops in one area where they are exposed to as much traffic as possible." He cited the airport in Hilo as an example of wrong placement of the concession stands, out of the traffic flow.

At almost \$70 million, the Kahului Airport expansion still is not the most expensive airport construction underway in Hawaii; that distinction remains at Honolulu International, according to Miyamoto.

Expansion at Kahului has, however, created the kind of discussion in the community similar to that on Oahu sur-

*"My personal view is that Maui needs a second airport . . . and in our master plan we'd make whatever adjustments are necessary."*

rounding the building and subsequent expansion of Honolulu International.

For example, the Maui Chamber of Commerce continues to look at the overall transportation picture for Maui, and so far has stated a very moderate—some say cautious—approach to Kahului Airport operations. The Chamber is on record with supporting the concept of a first-class airport, supports the current expansion program, but opposes any runway extension.

Recently the Chamber heard engineer Pitt's support for the Puunene site; following that meeting one Chamber member advocated a long-range look at Puunene's potential and problems as a site for some sort of aviation facility. The Chamber member told MAUI INC. in essence that what the Chamber feared and opposed was an uncontrolled growth, not coordinated with other State and County plans and programs, and not supported by the requisite infrastructure.

What the Chamber sought, he said, was a planned, environmentally-protected air facility that stemmed from an orderly growth and a recognition of what Maui might be 15 years from now. ☐





Stephen Pitt gestures at Puunene site he says should contain Maui's primary airport instead of Kahului.

## The Loyal Opposition: Stephen Pitt Dissents

Sydney-born engineer Stephen Pitt, a Maui resident for years, has a number of reasons why he opposes Kahului Airport expansion—or even its existence. Pitt thinks the airport should be at Puunene, and claims people are beginning to come around to his point of view.

"Puunene is a better site for many reasons," he says. "It's geographically closer to the population centers of Maui, yet there would be less noise impact on population centers than Kahului Airport. Puunene could be planned better.

"What concerns me is that they'll put \$80 million into Kahului Airport in the next 15 years and it will be to full design capacity. The minute it's completed it's obsolete. Where do you expand to?"

To comments that airport construction at Puunene would be more costly because it would be starting from the ground up, Pitt replies:

"It would cost considerably more to build an all-new airport at Puunene—initially. In the long run it would even out.

"Some people say it's too late to start at Puunene now, even if they agree with me it's a better site. But I say it's not too late. I think they should go ahead with improvements at Kahului, mainly with the parking aprons, but they shouldn't build the main terminal building or control towers."

Pitt sees a future for Kahului Airport as a general aviation site, downgraded from its function as Maui's primary airport. Puunene makes more sense, he says, because "it's logical to put the airport away from residential areas. As far as land use goes, Puunene is a better place. I cannot think of any major items that would shoot down the concept of Puunene.

"Some areas will get more noise than now, of course; perhaps the fringes of Kihei and Kahului, and Maalaea.

"But I don't want to see the north shore areas, the residential and beach areas degraded because of noise pollution. We have here a windsurfing mecca, an area that's going to be a big income-producer for Maui. That area won't be a pleasant place to be with all the noise pollution.

"By the year 2,000 we'll have three times the takeoffs and landings we do now. And in 15 to 20 years we'll need the beach areas for parks."

Pitt also argues with the legality of the State's procedures on Kahului Airport, specifically the current environmental impact statements (required by law prior to major government construction projects).

"In 1982, when the present environmental impact statement was done, there was no windsurfing. There weren't any overseas flights either. That makes the environmental impact statements obsolete."

According to Pitt, the State of

Hawaii still owns 1,686 acres of land at Puunene, making it economical as a future airport site.

"Just about everyone I've talked to agrees Puunene is a logical idea," says Pitt, himself a private pilot. "Already the State's predictions of volume will use up everything they're proposing to build at Kahului . . . they'll be at peak capacity by the time they're finished."

Puunene has known an airport in the past. Construction of a facility there began on June 1, 1938, and progressed through December 7, 1941, when the military took control of all airfields in the Territory. Puunene was expanded. A second field was established at Kahului which gradually absorbed most of Puunene's functions, and improvements at Puunene stopped.

From 1938 through World War II various branches of the Federal government spent \$11,256,277 on Puunene, according to State sources, with the Territory of Hawaii contributing \$44,079. In 1951, a program got underway to transfer Puunene's operations to Kahului, and June, 1952, saw the start of full commercial airline operations from Kahului.

Those operations meant the end of Puunene as a site for future commercial activities. But not forever, if Stephen Pitt is successful in his efforts to revive Puunene and put it back in action.