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HAWAII

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Left to right: Washington Place, the governor's official residence in downtown Honolulu; orchids at Foster Gardens, Oahu; Governor and Mrs. George Ariyoshi at Washington Place



The Style

'Quiet but effective'—just like her husband, the governor—Jean Ariyoshi sets a successful and stylish example in making a home for her family and the people of Hawaii.

By Lois Taylor

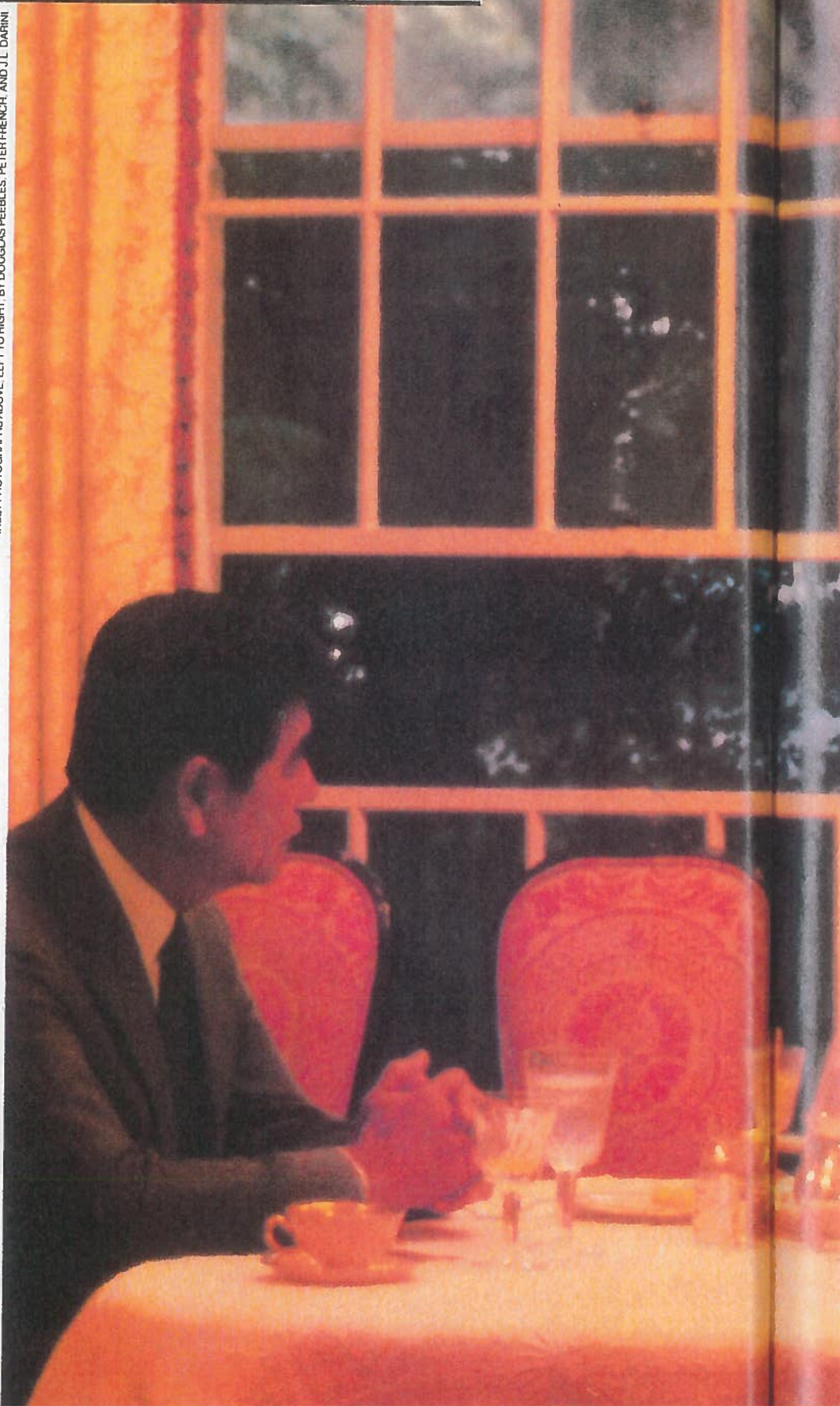


Jean Ariyoshi outside in the garden of Washington Place.

On August 21, the people of Hawaii will plant 25,000 trees to celebrate Hawaii's twenty-fifth anniversary of statehood. This carefully orchestrated project will involve everybody from the governor of the state to committees of kindergarteners, and it has been conceived and developed by one person, Hawaii's First Lady, Jean Ariyoshi. ►

Photograph by Brett Upchurch

INSET PHOTOGRAPHS ABOVE: LEFT TO RIGHT: BY DOUGLAS PEEBLES; PETER FRENCH AND J.L. DARINI





Governor and Mrs. George Ariyoshi eating breakfast at Washington Place, the official governor's residence in downtown Honolulu. Behind Jean Ariyoshi hangs an 1892 portrait of Queen Liliuokalani, Hawaii's last reigning monarch and a former owner of the mansion. Photograph by Michael Evans/DITLOHA

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They moved into Washington Place.

JEAN ARIYOSHI

following George Ariyoshi's election as the Democratic candidate for governor in 1972. "From the beginning I wanted to restore and redecorate the house," Jean Ariyoshi says. "I guess I'm a history buff. I went to the state archives, and I dug up everything I could find out about Washington Place. It originally had eight rooms—it now has seventeen, with seven baths. Many of the previous governors added

rooms to the house, but we haven't." Free tours of the lower-floor public rooms and the garden are led three times a week by docents who are trained by Ariyoshi.

"We've done a major restoration that took almost four years. We haven't tried to reproduce what was here when it was Queen Liliuokalani's home because this is a place where a family lives, and it is not a museum. For example, look at these pictures," she laughs, leading the way to a koa

exhibit case containing turn-of-the-century photographs and personal jewelry of Hawaii's last monarch.

One photograph showed the queen in a Hawaiian version of Victorian interior decorating. The queen's taste ran to covering every square inch of flat surface with boxes and vases and pictures and memorabilia. "There is no way I could live like that," Ariyoshi says. Instead, Washington Place is cool and uncluttered. Furniture and curtains are in soft pastels that complement the antique golden-brown koa furniture. The white two-story house stands on 3.1 acres in the middle of Honolulu, next door to the Episcopal Cathedral of St. Andrew and across the street from the state capitol.

It was there in January of 1982 that the Ariyoshis' daughter Lynn was married to Rick Takemoto. The ceremony was followed by one of the largest receptions the Ariyoshis have given while residents of Washington Place.

"We invited one thousand people to a lawn party," Ariyoshi exclaims. "Fortunately, the weather was lovely. I had buffet tables set up around the lawn, each one offering a different ethnic food. We had Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, and traditional American dishes, and a marvelous selection of desserts. Everybody loves desserts. And Hawaiian entertainers played music during the evening."

In their first year at Washington Place, the Ariyoshis were initiated into the mysterious world of international protocol by the official visits of Queen Elizabeth II of England and by the Emperor and Empress of Japan. "We had only four days' notice that Queen Elizabeth would be a guest for dinner. I decided on a formal dinner in the state dining room," she recalls. "The china was ordered from Noritake in Japan during the administration of the last governor, John A. Burns, and it has the state seal on it. With it we used the silver that was a gift to Kamehameha IV from Emperor Napoleon III in 1858. It is magnificent, quite ornate. The crystal is contemporary."

The crystal provided something of a problem when the queen asked for a martini before dinner. Nobody knew where a stemmed martini glass might be, if indeed there was one at all. One was located at the back of a pantry cabinet, washed, and filled with the royal martini.

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The Ariyoshis were given several months' notice before the visit of Japan's Emperor Hirohito and his empress. "I felt that they have the best of Japanese, Chinese, and French food at home, and there wasn't much point in trying to compete with that," Ariyoshi says. "So we decided to give a luau luncheon because they had never eaten Hawaiian food."

Luau's, however, aren't for everyone. "Things don't always go as planned," recalls Ariyoshi. "I thought that since they are Polynesian, the king and queen of Tonga would love to have a luau given in their honor. The day before the dinner I met them at the airport, and I asked the king if he liked Hawaiian food. As politely as he could, he managed to get across the idea that he didn't like it at all. So out went my menu. But the queen added that he likes Chinese and Japanese food, so we had a combination of both."

To the luau's, Jean Ariyoshi wears muumuus that have high, ruffled necklines. And she prefers solid pastels rather than busy floral prints. She buys some of her clothes in Honolulu and others on her frequent travels. A personal friend of Tokyo designer Hanae Mori, Ariyoshi often wears her designs to formal events. Locally, she buys from island designers Na Lei Brooks, Amos Kotomori, and Allen Akina. At home, she usually receives afternoon guests wearing Hawaiian-influenced fashions. They are appropriate to the historic house and to the interiors that she has restored during the past 10 years.

The piano in the sitting room is one of the documented possessions of Liliuokalani in Washington Place. "The queen sent koa logs to New York in 1892—logs cut in Kamuela on Hawaii. Fischer Company built the piano and shipped it back. It is one of the most treasured pieces in this house, and it is always kept in tune," she explains.

The history of some of the other pieces is less certain. She points to an upholstered wing chair. "I found that in the cellar of Queen Emma's Summer Palace. I remembered a picture I had seen of the queen sitting in such a chair. I have no proof at all that this is the same one, but you know about goosebumps. I felt them when I saw the chair, and I knew it was the queen's."

Washington Place was built by John Dominis, a sea captain, between 1842 and 1846, for his wife and young son.

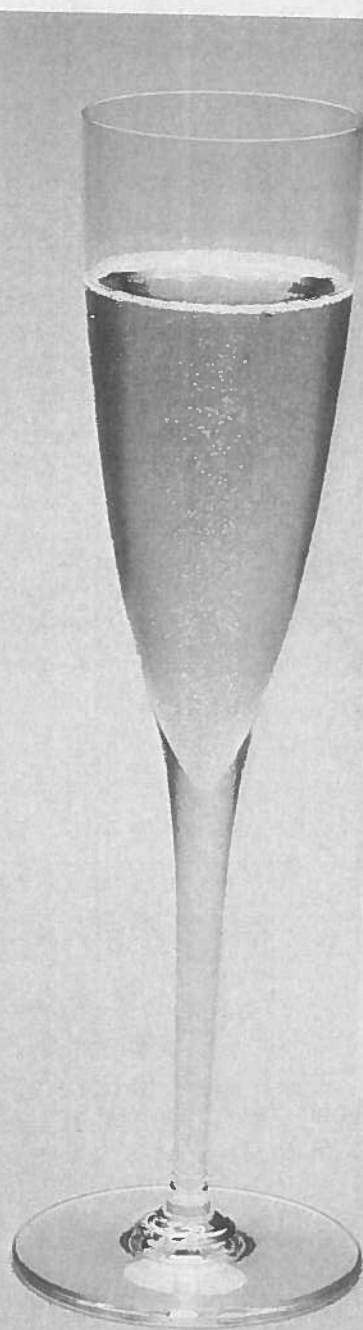
Shortly after moving into the house, Captain Dominis sailed for China to buy furniture. The ship left Honolulu Harbor on August 5, 1846, and was never heard from again. His young widow took in boarders.

One of them was the American commissioner to the Sandwich Islands, and it was his suggestion to name the residence for his country's first president. When Mary Dominis died, Washington Place was left to her son, John Owen Dominis, by then husband and

prince consort of Hawaii's Queen Liliuokalani. When he died, the property was inherited by the queen, who was deposed in 1895 and imprisoned for nine months in Iolani Palace.

When released, she returned to Washington Place, and at her death it was left to a number of heirs. It was the suggestion of Prince Kuhio that the Territory of Hawaii acquire the property for use as the governor's mansion. This was done in 1921.

When Liliuokalani died, she willed



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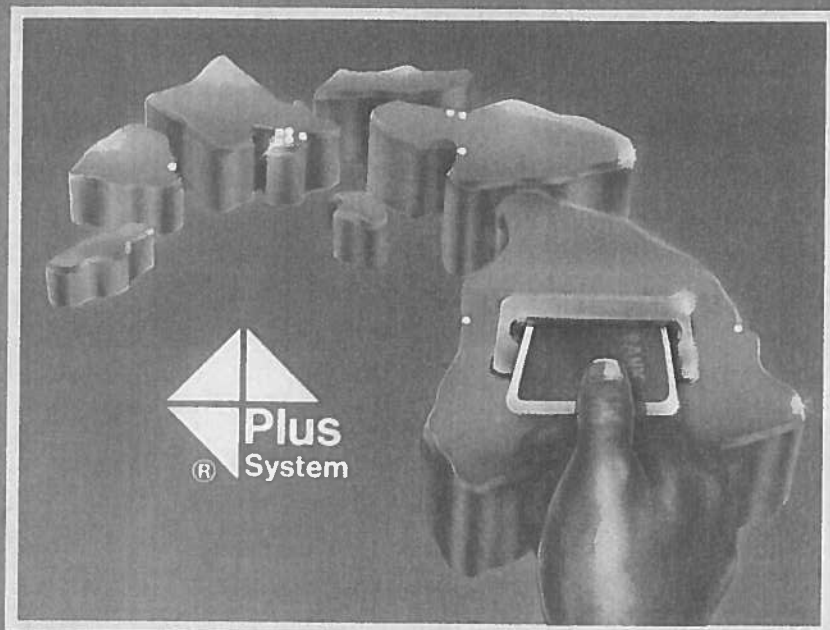
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JEAN ARIYOSHI

her possessions to the Bishop Museum. "I went into the vaults at the museum and brought a number of her things home," says Ariyoshi. "One was a miniature kukui-nut lei, made from much smaller nuts than grown commonly today. George knew where they grow and had several young trees brought here. We have planted two of them to form an arbor at an entrance into the garden.

"That, and a visit to Singapore, gave me the idea for the tree planting for Hawaii's Silver Jubilee. When I was in Singapore last year, I was fascinated to see that the whole city is kept like a garden. Everything is green, flowers and plants are everywhere. Remembering the anniversary of statehood, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could plant more trees in Hawaii!' So we are going to plant twenty-five thousand.

"The governor will plant the first one at the capitol. A week or two before, everyone involved in the planting will sign an agreement with me that they will plant the tree properly and then take care of it afterwards. We are going to call it 'Planting a Lifetime of Aloha.'"

Ariyoshi manages a staff of six housemaids, a cook, four gardeners, a secretary, and a 24-hour security patrol at Washington Place. "When we moved here, the security and the lack of privacy was a surprise. It was difficult for the children, but I decided the security was there for a reason. You have to accept certain things along with the job.

"It's hard to believe that ten years have gone by. It's been like a marathon, going and going. Time is relative—the busier you are, the faster it goes. What I'll miss most when the governor's term ends is this house, living with the beauty and history of it. It has become an important part of my life."

When she is asked what she won't miss, she pauses and seems to be unable to think of anything negative about her years as Hawaii's First Lady. Then she says, "The loss of my own time. Ask instead, 'What will you most enjoy having back?' It will be time, time that belongs to me." ■

Lois Taylor was born in San Francisco but came to Hawaii as a bride in 1944 and has never left. She has been a feature writer for the Honolulu Star-Bulletin for 23 years.