



Honoring
S. Russell Oda
Distinguished Alumnus

Russell Oda, fondly referred to as Russ, was born in Hilo to parents Shigeru K. Oda of Paukaa and Tsuruyo Yamamoto Oda of Hilo. He married wife Akiko in 1952 and they have one daughter, Rosanne A. Oda-Ching who is a school counselor on Oahu. A graduate of Hilo High, Russ attended the University of Michigan and later Woodbury College before being drafted by the Army in 1951. He trained at the Army Officer Candidate School, Fort Riley, Kansas, and Army Officer Finance School, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana and was honorably discharged as a 1st Lieutenant in 1954.

After leaving the military, Russ went to the University of Oregon to study Architecture under the G.I. Bill. He became interested in building and architecture having been exposed to this line of work through his fathers contracting business, S. K. Oda, Ltd. A part-time summer job in Honolulu with Ken Roehrig, AIA (his fathers friend) inspired him to pursue architecture as a career. It was at the University of Oregon that he met his future business partner Harrell McCarty who was assigned to an adjacent drafting table in one of his classes. Russ earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1959 and after gaining valuable job experience in Oregon he returned to Hilo in 1962 to work in the family business as a designer. In 1967 Russ and Harrell established Oda/McCarty Architects Limited and in 2004 merged with Durrant Media Five. Russ retired in 2009 but remains active as a consultant with Fleming & Associates, LLC

The prolific work of Oda/McCarty is visible throughout the Big Island. Many familiar buildings designed include Hilo Main Post Office, Waiakea High School, Central Pacific Bank, Bank of Hawai'i Kona, Kealakehe High School, Shinmachi Tsunami Memorial, W.M. Keck Observatory Headquarters, County of Hawaii - One Pauahi, Waikoloa Elementary School, Hale Anuenue, Mauna Lani Golf Club House, HPM Building Supply, Big Island Candies, Hilo Judiciary Complex, and many more. Their work has been recognized by the American Institute of Architects and published in many national magazines, including Sunset Magazine and Los Angeles Times. His very first project in Hilo (and one of his personal favorites), the Wailoa Center, was designed for the Department of Land and Natural Resources in 1970 because it was a creative process that incorporated many natural elements.

Russ has a long professional and civic relationship with UH Hilo. His firm designed nearly all of the astronomy support facilities in university park, including the Imiloa Astronomy Center and the UH Institute of Astronomy. He has also served on the UH Hilo Advisory Committee for 8 years during a period of tremendous growth for the university.

In 2008 Russ and his wife Aki established a need based endowed scholarship at UH Hilo in memory of his grandmother Keru Oda. Keru Oda was born into poverty near Fukuoka, Japan and was not formerly educated. She immigrated to Hawaii in 1898 and worked in the Paukaa sugar cane fields with her husband Chujiro Oda. She also raised Russ from infancy through age 16. It wasnt until age 63 that she was able to learn how to read and write Japanese Katakana with the help of her grandson Russ. Keru Oda understood that a good education would lead to opportunities for future generations. Today her descendents are successful engineers, teachers, architects, doctors, bankers, nurses and realtors. Through this scholarship, Keru Odas family honors her legacy and helps others who need assistance in pursuing their dreams.
