



1. TURK TOKITA

**Born: May 25, 1920
Kauai, Hawaii**

**Though his face
has changed in
the last 50**

**years, Turk Tokita's
influence is as strong
as ever.**



Patriarch of Kauai's Democratic Party, he is a political creature of legend. He's managed every Democratic gubernatorial campaign on Kauai since John Burns in 1954; his political influence in the governor's office is unparalleled. "Tokita is the king maker of politicians," said one community leader.

A humble man, Tokita's roots go deep. His grandmother and grandfather left Niigata, Japan and came to Kauai to work on the plantation. "They were like indentured slaves," says Tokita. "They were paid only \$15 a month."

Like many Japanese-Americans across the U.S., at age 21 Turk volunteered to serve in World War II. After more than three years in the 442nd, Tokita returned home a changed man. The war greatly affected him, a pain he feels just as strongly when he speaks of it even today. Unable to bounce back and function once home, his family convinced him to go to college and take up photography. By his junior year Tokita had enough of the windy city. "I couldn't stand Chicago, so I quit school and came home." It was then, in 1950, that he opened Turk's Photo Studio in Lihue.

In the early 50s Tokita took an interest in politics. "We needed statehood in the worst way," he says. Convinced that John Burns was the man to make the languishing dream a reality, Tokita took control of his Kauai campaign. Burns was elected and in 1959 Hawaii statehood was secured.

From 1957 until 1982, Tokita served as administrative assistant to the County Board of Supervisors (later County Council). Among many other endeavors over the years, Tokita took the lead in the drawn-out push to build a hotel at Nukolii, along with now Representative Ezra Kanoho, former County Clerk Tad Miura Sr., Bob Yotsuda, CPA Wally Rezentes Sr. and public relations executive Bobby Franklin.

In 1987 he and Kauai Realty VP Mark Tanaka started Kauai Consultants, a company that assisted developers in obtaining land use and zoning approvals. Shortly after Hurricane Iniki the company was dissolved.

Driven by a desire to expand economic opportunities, Tokita recently formed the Kauai Citizens Task Force "Make Work & Job Training." Tokita remains one of the few people on Kauai able to garnish the collective muscle of unions, business and government leaders.

Close Associates: Realtor Tad Miura Sr. and Engineering Consultant Clyde Kodani

2. GARY BALDWIN

**Born: Jan 17, 1947
St. Louis, Missouri**

**Came to Kauai:
1982**



Of our 10 most influential people on Kauai, Gary Baldwin is certainly the most controversial. In our interviews, a few said "be it for good or bad, Gary Baldwin is definitely influencing Kauai." One community leader said, "Gary's very entrepreneurial, very smart, a good business man and a hard worker." Another said, "Gary operates on a narrow agenda and manipulates whatever necessary to get what he wants."

Baldwin comes from St. Louis, Missouri, where he worked for many years in the aluminum industry. Believe it or not, his only political involvement before coming to Kauai was voting in the ballot booth. He became active in community affairs almost immediately upon arriving here in 1982. By 1984 he was on the board of directors for the Hawaii Visitors Bureau (HVB), Kauai Chapter. Shortly thereafter he captured the attention of Kauai's power elite and was off with Uncle Tony, Auntie Maile, Mary Thronas and others marketing the island at mainland tradeshow. He served on the HVB board until 1990.

In 1991 Baldwin's focus shifted from tourism promotion to economic diversification. Since that time he's served on the Kauai Economic Development Board, which he currently chairs. In 1994 he was appointed to the State's High Technology Development Corporation board and in 1996 to the State's Small Business Task Force. In 1996 Mayor Maryanne Kusaka appointed him to the Planning Commission, a commission he now chairs. Baldwin is very close to Senator Daniel Inouye and spends a great deal of time at the state legislature.

On the business side, from 1982 to 1993 Baldwin managed the local Thrifty car rental agency. In 1993 he bought the local National car rental franchise and opened two Baskin Robbins stores. In 1997 he sold the National franchise and opened Crusty Gecko Bakery.

Baldwin is not one to shy away from controversy.

**Though his name tends to draw
loud and clashing reactions, all
agree he's a tireless worker who
genuinely has Kauai's best interests
at heart.**

Baldwin is described as intelligent, passionate and driven. With the possible exception of local businessman Charlie King, few on the uncompensated community leadership level put in time like Baldwin.

Close with: Former PMRF Captain Bob Mullins, Timeshare Executive Lynn McCrory, and local businessmen Hollis Crozier, Ron Sakoda, and Charlie King.