

I joined the IfA in 1986 and met many wonderful people through my 27 years there. Back then, Donald Hall was the director, Lennox Cowie, the associate director. We had no computers--word processors were used for typing handwritten manuscripts and drafted letters. If there was an urgent message to send, a telex was sent from our word processors! As things progressed, the fax machine made communications around the world so much simpler, until you'd try to send one and find that the receiving institution turned their machines off at night! That usually meant someone had to stay up late to send it! Telemail was my first interaction with "computerized" mail. How sophisticated we thought it was.

In 1988, to create a little fun and provide a casual environment for new students and faculty/staff to meet, I started the first Halloween "costume" potluck luncheon at the IfA-Manoa. To my delight it has been an annual event since. I will never forget the look on Don Hall's face as he entered my office seeing me sitting there in my witch outfit. From that year forward all the directors came in costume and attended the luncheon. Group costumes arose. Admin would theme their costumes after current movies, like "Men in Black," and "A Hundred and One Dalmatians"; IRTF pulled off a pirate ship with working cannons; faculty and postdocs performed as "Back Street Boys", we had the Ghost Busters crew, including the Stay-Puft man, a school of jellyfish, Sponge Bob Squarepants riding a bicycle in the courtyard, and there was a witch, Ann Boesgaard, who came with her (real) beautiful black cat. The Director's Office was a mental hospital one year (we thought it was appropriate), with Interim Director Robert McLaren as the head doctor; Rolf Kudritzki came as Superman and I in my costume was Krypto, Superman's dog. Costumes were so well done that campus sent a photographer to the IfA for a couple of years to take pictures to be published in KaLeo!

Another occasion was an evening Christmas party. Every year the IfA would have a surprise Santa arrive at the party. One year I borrowed a sleigh, which we decorated in the shop with lights and garland. Nick Kaiser was Santa and his two boys dressed as elves and pulled the sleigh into the courtyard. Jimmy Heasley was at an age where he questioned Santa. After this performance we convinced Jimmy for a couple more years that there really was a Santa! As I understand it, Brent Tully came down from the roof to the courtyard one year (before my time)! John Rayner was Santa one year and ended up with his red Santa pants around his ankles because they were too big!

In May 1987, we celebrated regular telephone service at Hale Pohaku. Astronomers could no longer head to the mountain to find peace and tranquility.

In July 1991 we celebrated the total solar eclipse on Mauna Kea. Helping to coordinate this event was amazing and a time I'll never forget. Aloha Airlines worked with me allowing me to book flights to the Big Island for the eclipse by using fake names that were then replaced with real names as they were known. Obviously this was before 9-11!! Oh the stories!!

In 2001 a Tree Committee was formed to save the banyan tree in the courtyard. Several members of the IfA faculty and staff formally "adopted" the banyan tree from UH to prevent its possible removal. Thanks to a faculty member at the time who "chained" himself to the tree, facilities backed off and the tree remains today.

Special occasions were always a time to celebrate. One particular party was held in the IfA courtyard at the request of the Governor. To our surprise, the Governor and his staff couldn't make it; however they paid for the entire gathering to honor Ed Lu, a NASA astronaut and former postdoc at the IfA. For us it was like a family reunion!

While in the Director's Office, I had the good fortune of working with four IfA Directors,

Don Hall, Rolf Kudritzki, Bob McLaren and Guenther Hasinger. Of course, they were all my favorites!!

Thanks, IfA. It was a wonderful journey for me.

–Nancy Lyttle  
Retired, Assistant to the Director



Left to right: Stephanie Duennebier, Karen Rehbock, Nancy Lyttle and Bob McLaren



Bob McLaren and Rolf Kudritzki



Rolf Kudritzki and Nancy Lyttle