

ALEXANDER HUME FORD

At 77, Alexander Hume Ford is gone. A restless life has come at last to the final peace.

Honolulu has been the haven and the meeting-place of many individuals who may well be described as "characters." Some were mere show-offs; some were visionaries with no talent for getting things done. Some were dreamers who made dreams come true.

Alexander Hume Ford was a mixture of all three. He frankly admitted that some of his eccentricities were for stage purposes—to attract attention. But with these he had daring dreams, and his dreams were of a better city, a better Hawaii, a better Pacific, a better world.

The later generation of islanders or newcomers knows and has heard little of this irrepressible, talkative, energetic, thinly-nervous man with unlimited imagination and a perpetual itch to "start something." But from the first decade of this century until a few years ago he was one of Hawaii's best known residents.

He had something about him of the atmosphere of the prophets of the desert—undisciplined men with wild eyes and unkempt beards, who emerged from the wilderness to utter strange truths that startled orthodox ears.

It was part of his limitations that he seemed only half in earnest. His offhand manner frequently impaired the effectiveness of his evangelism. And it was his perpetual tragedy that sometimes his most ambitious undertakings crashed on some commonplace and often ludicrous obstacle which a more "practical" man would have recognized and provided for. Yet he could emerge, cheerful and undaunted, from "flops" that would have wrecked a less sanguine temperament.

He was fired, long ago, with a dream of world brotherhood, through a spirit and form which should develop in Hawaii and spread, like the circles on water from a thrown stone, around the globe. For a long while he felt that his dream was coming true.

A visit to Japan and the sudden, shocking realization that behind the smiling mask of amity the Japanese were moving coldly on their program of Asian conquest, dispelled this dream, and with its dispelling, the dynamo within him was gone. Thenceforth he was a shadow of himself.

He has left behind him not only such tangible achievements as the Outrigger club, the Pan-Pacific Science Congress and the Trail and Mountain club, but other fine projects of which he was not directly a part but which were suggested and inspired by things he was doing or trying to do.

We of the Hawaii of today owe more than most of us realize to the man often smiled at and sometimes derided as "that crazy Alexander Hume Ford."