



The April meeting at Waialae Country Club could best be described as a variety show. Over 80 members and guests enjoyed Paula's talk—on many subjects—and the other talents in the room. Above, Sumiko Allegar and Inger Højfeldt (left) dance the hula to the singing and playing of Hector Venegas, Kimo Kahumano and Mihana Sousa, the 3 standing at the back and to the right of the lectern. More on this wonderful meeting below.

## PAULA HELFRICH EDUCATES AND ENTERTAINS

**Paula Helfrich**, who wore many hats during her Pan Am and Hawaii years, had the audience in the palm of her hand as she spoke of her experiences in various Pan Am departments, her later work with the State of Hawaii, her book and the current conditions in Myanmar. She bounced from one subject to another and back again in her delightful talk and it all made sense. Here are a few notes on the topics she covered:

On Myanmar where she was raised and where she now works as a teacher: Politically the situation in Myanmar has been improving steadily since the monks marched in the streets seven years ago. Since then, elections have been held, and even though many of the elected are military officials, they are listening more to the people. (Most of us are aware of positive change due to coverage of Opposition Leader Aung San Suu Kyi's recent successful run for a seat in Parliament and a travel article telling of the return of the Buddhist Shwedagon Pagoda Festival after it had been suppressed for 20 years. The latter was covered in the February 26th issue of the *Honolulu Advertiser*.) Paula says the Buddhist monks are highly respected, even by many military leaders, and really hold power in the country.

On her work as a supervisor in catering: While the men were not used to having a female supervisor, the lovely ladies accepted her and backed her a "100%", making her job a bit easier. She loved the way they worked together. She noted she had never before heard employees speak to each other in the Hawaiian language and was impressed that they could communicate in the language. She invited a couple of the fellows to sit in on a pre-flight briefing in the Flight Service office. They were amazed that the purser began the briefing by having everyone introduce themselves. They had no idea that flight attendants may fly with a particular crew member only once or twice during their career. One of the fellows said, "Sounds sort of lonely." Paula noted that

those employees who worked in positions on the ground tended to assume the flight attendant job was all glamorous. She added, "Thank God Pan Am hired only eccentric people. They all got along!"

On her co-authored book, *Flying—a Novel*, (with **Rebecca Sprecher**): Many people who have read the book ask her, "Did that really happen?" or "Is that really true?" She answered by saying that at least 90% of it was true, though characters were composites of different people she knew and things did not necessarily happen to the character to whom it was attributed. So if you have read the book and wondered about the approach light story, it did actually happen. If you are not one of those who purchased a book at the meeting, you should purchase a copy if this piques your interest. Right: Paula signs a book for **Leila Mahdjub-Hughes** after the meeting.



On her interest in history, including that of Pan Am: She told how she obtained documents and other items from Pan Am's past. Many employees knew that she believed in the historical value of such things. At one time, there was a TWU strike and, while marching on the picket line, some of the union's members saw "old files" being tossed into a dumpster at the behest of the then station manager. Several of them took the stuff out of the dumpster, put it in the trunk of her car and then went back to the picket line. When more was thrown in, they filled up their own car trunks. After Pan Am, she also worked with many people in the legislature. She obtained some items from the offices of legislators who no longer had any use for it after Pan Am left the islands.

In addition to Paula's lively talk, the meeting was enlivened by **Terry Webber's** guest, **Mihana Souza**. (Our readers may recall that Mihana also entertained us at our Annual Gala in December.) Mihana, who is a well-known entertainer, opened the meeting with a Hawaiian chant in which she called on blessings to be bestowed on all. **Jade Sen** brought guest **Hector Venegas** who is also a close friend of Paula's. At one time, all three worked on state issues with legislators. Hector wrote the lyrics to the song, "Where I Live There Are Rainbows". (**Peter Moon**, not present, wrote the music.) At the end of the meeting, Hector and Mihana sang the song while two flight attendants, Sumiko Allegar and Inger Højfeldt, danced the hula. **Kimo Kauhmano**, another entertainer, happened to be in the next banquet room with a *Hawaii Five-O* group, and he came over and joined in the singing. This wonderful meeting offered something for everyone! (Photos begin on page 4.)



Hector Venegas stands at the microphone as he and Kimo Kauhmano join Mihana Souza in singing Hector's song, "Where I Live There Are Rainbows",

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On the table at the back are door prizes donated by James Husing and Henry Blakstad, Jr.