R. Alex Anderson

The Composer who Charmed Hawai'i and the World

Very few Hawaiian composers can claim as many "popular standards" translated into as many different languages as R. Alex Anderson. If you hear a familiar Hawaiian tune with English words chances are good that Robert Alexander Anderson is the composer. In fact, during the Christmas holiday just past, you were probably among the thousands around the world who sang "Mele Kalikimaka" at least once.

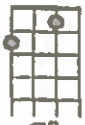
R. Alex Anderson was born in Honolulu in 1894, and from high school on to his passing in 1995, composed nearly 200 songs. "Andy", as he was called by close friends wrote songs based on traditional Hawaiian themes telling of flowers, scenes, islands, seas, people, events and customs. A prominent businessman by vocation, and a WWI veteran, he had no formal music training and spoke no Hawaiian, yet his compositions still give rise to dreams of Hawai'i as "paradise" for people all over the world.

Among the most familiar of his compositions are "Lovely Hula Hands", and "Lei of Stars". "White Ginger Blossoms" was written at the suggestion of film star Mary Pickford, and "I Will Remember You", while a student at Cornell University, homesick for his island home.

His most famous song, "Mele Kalikimaka", Hawai'i's Christmas song, went around the world on the back of Bing Crosby's recording of "White Christmas". Crosby, Andy Anderson's frequent visitor and golf partner, liked the tune so much when Andy played it for him that he surprised Anderson with the recording.

R. Alex Anderson was inducted into the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame in 1998

Mele Kalikimaka

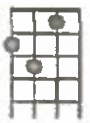


F

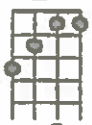
Mele Kalikimaka is the thing to say

C7

On a bright Hawaiian Christmas day

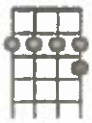


That's the island greeting that we send to you



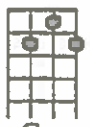
F

From the land where palm trees sway



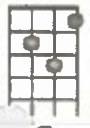
F7 Bb

Here we know that Christmas will be green and bright



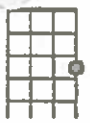
D7 G7 C7

The sun will shine by day and all the stars that night



F F7 D7

Mele Kalikimaka is the Hawaiian's way



Gm C F (turnaround with C 7)

To say Merry Christmas to you

Ukulele Club of Santa Cruz December 2004 - and again December 2007 led by Vince Tuzzi