

Helena G. Allen, *Stanford Ballard Dole: Hawaii's Only President, 1844-1926*. Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1988. Pp. 283, illustrations, index. US\$19.95.

Reviewed by Ruth Tabrah, Honolulu

Regrettably this biography is not the hoped-for solid, well-rounded work that the remarkable life and personality of Hawaii's only president deserves. The jacket copy of Helena Allen's book relates that she spent six years combing the resources of Hawaii's research libraries for documentation of the life story of one of Hawaii's most colorful and

controversial figures. Research is, however, only the first step in producing a good biography.

In his essay on the art of the biographer that prefaces the 1979 Smithsonian Institution publication, *Telling Lives*, Marc Pachter, historian of the National Portrait Gallery, writes: "Distinguished biography . . . bears no resemblance to the voluminous, indiscriminate compendia of facts shoveled on facts in which the biographer buries alive both his hero and the reader." Had Mrs. Allen taken the time to sort out and digest her research notes, had she tried to see and experience the essence of this truly remarkable man (unlikeable as she seems to have found him), this might well have been the distinguished biography history owes Sanford Ballard Dole.

Professor Leon Edel describes great biography as presenting "the essence of a life." Marc Pachter writes, "the eye of the fine biographer, like that of the portrait painter, sculptor, or photographer, catches the special gleam of character. Through the biographer we encounter another human being, we feel the presence of a recognizable, approachable life."

Auwe! At the beginning of a chapter on "The Republic," Allen describes her own problem with the subject she somehow felt she must tackle (p. 209). In commenting on letters written by Dole while he was president of the short-lived Republic of Hawaii, the author writes, "The researcher must struggle to find the complete man--only the man with a mission remains." But, to this reviewer, it was a struggle to try to find what Allen felt Dole's real mission was.

Perhaps the author's initial mistake was to assume that her readers should first familiarize themselves with her *Betrayal of Queen Liliuokalani, Last Queen of Hawaii, 1838-1917* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1982). She clearly states that any background of Hawaiian history essential to understanding Sanford Ballard Dole should be retrieved from her prior work--a truly lamentable decision.

History does become vivid and Dole himself a vibrant human being when Allen uses several pages of direct quotations from his *Memoirs*, such as Dole's fascinating account of the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani (pp. 183-186). This is one of the most colorful, compelling, and well-written sections--but it was done by Dole himself!

A careful final editing would possibly have disclosed to Allen the contradictions she has allowed, such as her portrayal of Dole's reactions to King Kalakaua's 1881 trip around the world. First she states, "There was a great deal of opposition to his [Kalakaua] taking the trip by the haole. Sanford Dole wrote his brother George, 'It is ridiculous that the

King should think he can influence immigration to the islands. He is just going to satisfy his own desires' " (p. 115). A few pages later she reverses herself (and confuses the reader) by stating, "Sanford disagreed violently with the immigration, especially of Chinese and Japanese. Yet he did not disfavor Kalakaua's trip [around the world] to find more compatible immigrants with the way of life in Hawaii" (p. 157).

The author's insistence on completely separating Dole's personal and political life in her organization of her material gives a schizophrenic impression of Dole's character and a peculiar view of cause and effect as being her duty to sort out and proclaim. For example, describing the fall of Sanford's wife, Anna, from a horse during a 25 December 1874 ride the Doles took up Nuuanu Valley, Allen concludes, "Anna's robust health suffered greatly and her outgoing and vivacious nature began to change as a result of the fall. From that time on, Sanford's political life began to rise and his marriage to decline" (p. 87).

A noticeable gap in Allen's otherwise voluminous research is her rather skewed portrait of Sanford Dole's father, Pioneer missionary Daniel Dole is presented as a narrow puritan, a quite incapable man who could never learn the Hawaiian language. She does not seem aware that Daniel Dole was a man of wide scholarship and otherwise considerable linguistic talent, His translation from the French of Theodore-Adolphe Barrot's *Unless Haste Is Made* (republished in 1978 by Press Pacifica) is considered extraordinary.

To some future writer of a readable, insightful, scholarly biography of Sanford Ballard Dole this unsuccessful try by Helena Allen will provide a wealth of research clues. Otherwise her biography can be viewed only as a failed attempt.