

FIVE TREES

Two trees to be moved for bypass road

By **TIMOTHY HURLEY**
Staff Writer

KULA — To make room for the Pukalani bypass highway, the state Department of Transportation has decided to move two of the Five Trees that stand at the junction of the Kula and Haleakala highways.

Robert Siarot, the DOT's Maui district engineer, said the two jacaranda trees will be uprooted and relocated within the island median in order to keep the five-tree cluster intact.

Siarot called the decision a compromise that will prevent an "ugly kink" in the highway and save between \$60,000 and \$100,000 in the cost to realign the route.

"We want a straight shot if at all possible," he said.

To realign the roads, it would mean having to revise the planned grades of the highways and to change the drainage system, among other things, Siarot said.

He said original highway construction plans developed by engineers in Honolulu had called for a complete removal of the trees at the intersection — the upper end of a three-lane road that will allow motorists to bypass Pukalani.

"What we're trying to do is compromise the community. We want to keep that. If we had moved all five trees, there would have been lots of complaints. It

will be a little inconvenient for us but we're willing to accommodate and compromise," Siarot said.

The two trees likely will be moved sometime in the next three months, Siarot said, adding that the \$3.8 million bypass project will be completed in the spring.

The five jacarandas became a recent focal point for aesthetic concerns over the proposed construction of an Upcountry high school in the property above the trees.

The trees, with their showy lavender flowers in the spring, have been captured in works of art and described by some as "the gateway to Upcountry Maui."

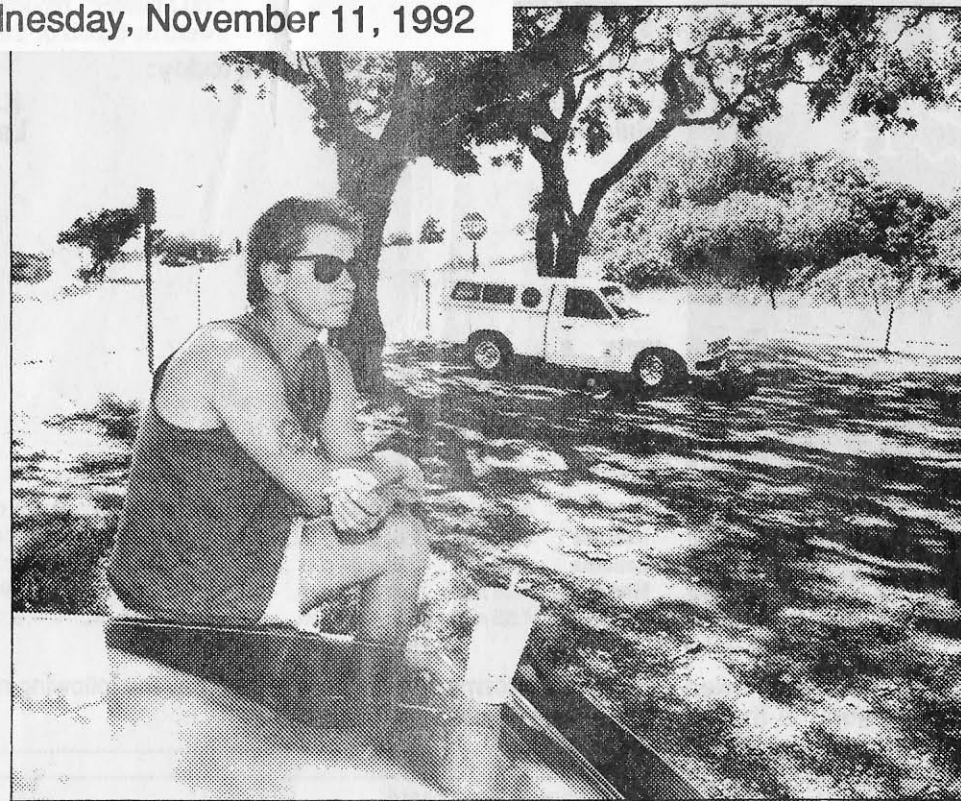
Several Upcountry residents said they aren't happy about the possibility of tampering with the Five Trees.

"You'd think they would have more regard for a landmark and design around it. I just don't understand," said Paul Fagan of Kula.

David Warren, an artist who has put the Five Trees on canvas, said he admires the state's effort to keep the grouping intact, but "I'll believe it when I see it."

"Whatever they do, it's not going to be the same as it was," Warren said. "I think it will ruin the effect."

When they are moved, the trees will have to be trimmed to reduce the shock. The jacaranda is a hardy tree that will take a year to a year and a half to rebound, according to an arborist.



The Maui News / MATTHEW THAYER photos

Maul plumber Michael Bonofiglio ate his lunch Tuesday while parked in the shade of the "Five Trees" that grow at the junction of Haleakala and Kula highways. Two of the jacaranda trees are scheduled to be moved to make way for the Pukalani bypass highway. "It's a nice spot," Bonofiglio said. "If I'm in the area, I like to come here for lunch. You've got a nice little breeze and there's the shade."