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No longer a pipe dream, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for King Kekaulike High School Tuesday. The blessing by the Rev. Heather

Mueller-Fitch is seen here through a concrete drain pipe resting along Kula Highway. About 60 people attended the ceremony.

## Kekaulike site blessed

It's like a birth, a wedding, says one at ceremony for high school

By TIMOTHY HURLEY  
Staff Writer

KULA — Maui schools chief Ralph Murakami described it as historic.

Former Maui District Superintendent Lokelani Lindsey called it a dream come true.

Alec McBarnet Jr. of Kula was so moved, he took his gold-painted shovel and ceremonial hard hat home with him as keepsakes.

"I'm so excited," McBarnet said, comparing the day to the birth of a child or a wedding.

After more than six years of planning, pulling, pushing and prodding, officials gathered Tuesday for a symbolic ceremony marking the long-awaited construction of King Kekaulike High School, the first public high school to be built in Hawaii in 20 years.

About 60 people attended the groundbreaking and blessing on the former pineapple field above the Five Trees intersection where the Kula and Haleakala highways meet.

As earth movers and other large trucks flattened the rolling terrain nearby, school officials, politicians and community members spoke about the school and the effort that made Tuesday's groundbreaking possible.

Maui Community College instructor Dick Mayer gave much of the credit to Lindsey for obtaining funds when they could have just as easily gone to other areas such as Kona and Kihei.

Mayer, who led a committee during the initial search for a site, challenged education officials to involve community members as much as possible in the affairs of the high school.

"Together we can make a wonderful school," he declared.

Mayer also challenged school officials to make King Kekaulike a focus for the entire Upcountry region, a place where educational, cultural and recreational opportunities are available to youngsters and adults alike.

Several speakers — gazing across the central valley to the West Maui Mountains and the ocean — couldn't help but declare the campus would be the most beautiful in the state.

"Look at the location," remarked state Rep. David Morihara. "It will be one of the most beautiful high schools in the state, if not the nation."

Other dignitaries in attendance included Mayor Linda Crockett Lingle, state Rep. Avery Chumbley and Maui state Board of Education member Meyer Ueoka. The principals from all of Upcountry's public schools were there, as were just about all the presidents from each school PTA.

Also there was 13-year-old Christina Drummond, student government president-elect at Kalama Intermediate School. Her class will be among the first students to enter the new public school in September 1995.

Lindsey, now a Bishop Estate trustee, said she started pursuing the new school seven years ago after learning that nearly 1,000 Upcountry students were being bused down the mountain to the Central Maui area.

In addition, she said, a lot of parents didn't like the fact their children were boarding buses in the early morning darkness and were denied access to extracurricular activities because the buses return soon after school.

But the road to construction was a

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## Kekaulike school site blessed

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rocky one. While everyone agreed Upcountry needed a high school, few, it seemed, could agree on where.

A committee of community members recommended a site at Apana Road between Makawao Avenue and Makani Road. But DOE officials opted for the Kula site after landowner Maui Land & Pineapple Inc. objected.

Opposition to the Five Trees site crystallized immediately, with foes claiming a high school would generate traffic congestion, ruin the beauty of "the gateway to Upcountry Maui" and lead to further development in the area.

The clamor against Five Trees grew so loud that then-state Superintendent Charles Toguchi empanelled a three-member committee from Oahu to make a final decision on the site. They chose Five Trees.

Because the school is expected to cost more than \$70 million, the DOE decided to build the school in phases, with only enough buildings its first year for the 9th-grade class. The plan calls for one grade to be added each of the following three years.

The \$21.2 million first phase will see the construction of an administration building, two classroom buildings, a cafeteria, a shower/locker facility, a playing field, courts and physical education classrooms.

The school is named for Kekaulike, one of the most powerful chiefs of Maui, a descendant of the Piilani chiefs. He ruled from 1700 to 1736.

The controversy surrounding the school site was alluded to during Tuesday's blessing by the Rev. Heather Mueller-Fitch of St. John's Episcopal Church in Keokea.

"To those who are still not at peace with the location, may they come to peace," she prayed.