

Heart attack cannot derail Kitagawa on healing path

By Michael Tsai

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When local masseur Wade Kitagawa suffered the third heart attack of his life last month, it wasn't as if his clients were overflowing with sympathy.

"I was in the hospital, and this one client called to confirm his appointment," says Kitagawa. "I told him I'd just had a heart attack, so he said, 'So, how about Thursday?' I told him I was still in the hospital so it might be some time before I could start again. So he said, 'OK, how about next week?'"

To be fair, Kitagawa hasn't given folks much reason to expect that something as trivial as a heart attack might slow him down. This is a person, after all, who was involved in no fewer than six horrific car wrecks with nary a lingering ache to show for any of them.

"I keep knocking on death's door, and death keeps kicking me out," Kitagawa says, laughing. "I know that this is because I have a destiny that God wants me to fulfill. I've been given a gift, and I can't die until I pass it along to someone else who will be able to do it better than me. When that time comes, it'll be OK because I'm not afraid to die."



Wade
Kitagawa

The oldest of four children born to a civilian worker at Hickam Air Force Base and a beauty school instructor, Kitagawa spent much of his young life looking after his siblings. After graduation from Roosevelt High School and a stint at the University of Hawaii, he earned a real estate license and worked as a Realtor for three years.

Kitagawa took his earnings and bought a snack shop and a pair of lunch wagons. Later he found work as a manager for Jolly Roger and Yum Yum Tree restaurants, which finally led him to his true calling.

Kitagawa turned to massage to relieve the pain in his overworked back. In time he made the acquaintance of masseur David Kimura, who started him on a path of learning that continues to this day.

Early on, Kitagawa integrated his knowledge of martial arts with his studies in massage. Later he expanded his base with intensive study of reiki, shiatsu, lomi-lomi, reflexology and other healing arts.

"A lot of other massage therapists eventually get sick and overwhelmed by the negative energies they get from other people," Kitagawa says. "I try to stay out of it by not making it about myself. I don't heal people; God does. I'm just an instrument for His will."

For the past year, Kitagawa has been taking classes at Kapiolani Community College in pursuit of a degree in nutrition that he hopes will lend some credibility to his recent experiments in disease-fighting diets.

Due to his own health problems, he has also greatly curtailed his own massage work, providing service to a small number of loyal clients who rely on his magic hands for relief.