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Press Release

**Lucky Maui Poet Meets Ancient Chinese Poet, Eye to Eye;
Celebration Scheduled for Borders Kahului, November 16, 2001, at 7 P.M.**

Living at the Monastery, Working in the Kitchen by Eric Paul Shaffer
Paper, \$12.95, ISBN 1-58775-004-X
Paperback original. Available at fine bookstores and
to the book trade from Ingram, Baker & Taylor,
Valentine Publishing Group, and other distributors.

Also available online at
Amazon.com, BN.com, and Borders.com

PDF, \$6.95, ISBN 1-58775-005-8
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“Coming from Okinawa to Hawai’i was one of the luckiest moves I’ve made in a long line of lucky moves,” says Eric Paul Shaffer. “After eight years in Japan, there was no better choice than Maui.”

Shaffer may be right. In the two and a half years since he moved to the island, he has signed contracts with Leaping Dog Press to publish two companion volumes of poetry when what started out as one book grew too large. *Portable Planet*, the first book, was published in November, 2000, and now its companion, *Living at the Monastery, Working in the Kitchen*, will be published October 1, 2001.

Living at the Monastery, Working in the Kitchen contains poems written in the voice of Shih-te, cook and janitor at the Buddhist-Taoist monastery of Kuo-ch’ing in the T’ien-t’ai Mountains in China during the T’ang Dynasty. Shih-te was the companion of the more famous Han-shan, whose poems Gary Snyder, Shaffer’s teacher at UC Davis, translated as *Cold Mountain Poems*.

“Although Han-shan left over 300 poems, Shih-te left only forty-nine,” notes Shaffer. “My poems elaborate on the life of Shih-te. I think of them as ‘textless translations.’”

Why write more poems for a Chinese cook and janitor after twelve or thirteen centuries? Shaffer insists the work is all part of his odd and wonderful luck. “Discovering the existence of

Shih-te through Gary Snyder's *Cold Mountain Poems*, then meeting and working with Snyder, and through him, meeting Bill Porter, who translated all of Shih-te's poems, is all part of the tumbling luck that makes me what I am today."

"My friend James Taylor III nicknamed me 'Lucky' when I landed my job as a faculty member at the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa, Japan. Now, the nickname is rarely used, but the luck stuck." What does he mean? Shaffer thinks for a moment. "Well, how many people can say they've had a book published in the last year of the second millennium and another published in the first year of the third millennium? See what I mean? Lucky."

With the good people at the Kahului Borders, the lucky poet has scheduled a reading and publication celebration for *Living at the Monastery, Working in the Kitchen*. The event will be at the Borders Kahului on Friday, November 16, 2001, at 7 p.m. Sixty-five people attended the publication celebration for *Portable Planet* last year, and many took home copies of the book.

"The support from the community of readers and writers in Maui, from Maui Community College, from the Maui Live Poets, and from Borders was remarkable. I promised everybody cake and coffee to get them there," says Shaffer, "but they stayed — I hope — for the poetry."

He will invite everybody and more back for this year's reading and signing of the new book. Since *Living at the Monastery, Working in the Kitchen* and *Portable Planet* are companion volumes, he wants the two readings to have a great deal in common: a big audience, lots of coffee, a good cake, and poems an audience will enjoy.

About his upcoming November publication celebration, again, he is feeling lucky. Asked why, he grins. "I'm an optimist by nature," says Shaffer, "and I'm not giving up my old nickname yet."

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