

# WAR MEMORIAL NATATORIUM

WAIKĪKĪ, O'AHU

## WHAT IS IT?

The Territory of Hawai'i built the Beaux Arts-style Natatorium in 1927, dedicating it to Islanders who served in World War I. With its salt-water pool intended for healthy recreation, it was the nation's first "living" war memorial. Duke Kahanamoku was the first to plunge in on opening day. In 1949, the Territory transferred the Natatorium to the City and County of Honolulu.

## WHAT THREATENS IT?

Long-term neglect and political uncertainty. From 1927 to 1997, no more than \$100,000—total—was spent to maintain the Natatorium. The pool has been closed, deemed unsafe, for the past 26 years. The Harris administration spent \$4 million in 1999 to restore the Natatorium's façade, and last winter embarked on a \$6 million restoration of the pool after part of the pool deck collapsed. In his first day in office this year, incoming Mayor Mufi Hannemann stopped work on the project.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Some community groups, such as Friends of the Natatorium, prefer full restoration. Others, such as the Kaimana Beach Coalition, argue that the archway should be preserved and the pool torn down. The city appears to favor the latter idea. "The city department of design and construction is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to look at the possibility of a study on the effects that removing portions of the pool wall might have on the beach's condition," says Bill Brennan, press secretary. "Nothing has been agreed to yet. Also, the corporation counsel's office [the city attorneys] is reviewing the [\$6 million restoration] contract to see what the ramifications of canceling the contract would be and what sort of money it would leave to work on the Natatorium. But we're not sitting around waiting for it to rot. The city didn't issue the stop-work order, then walk away."

PHOTO RAE HUO

