Outrigger® on the Lagoon – Fiji
Escapes Major Damage from Cyclone Evan

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Members of our ‘ohana in Fiji were right in the path of danger on December 17, 2012, when Tropical Cyclone Evan bore down on Viti Levu, the big island of that beautiful country and the location of Outrigger® on the Lagoon – Fiji. It was a killer storm that had just clobbered Samoa, leaving five dead on land and as many as 10 fishermen lost at sea.

General Manager Peter Hopgood and Outrigger's vuvalé (family) at our five-star beachfront property located 69 km (43 miles) southeast of Nadi, the location of Fiji’s principal airport, were prepared for the worst. Fortunately, the adjacent mountains sheltered the resort and, although some of the thatching on the roofs of the property's bures (cottages) was blown off and some trees were felled, the property escaped major damage.

General Manager Peter Hopgood said he was overwhelmed by the loyalty and dedication of his employees, both during and after the cyclone. All employees turned up to work at the resort on the morning after the storm, even though there had been a great deal of damage to houses in their villages. He reported that one employee from the resort's Ivi Fine Dine Restaurant, Leilani, actually swam across a flooded river so she could come to work and look after the guests.

Unfortunately, our affiliate resort, Castaway Island Fiji, located about 32 km (20 miles) almost due west of Nadi, did not escape the full wrath of TC Evan. The 66 bures and dining facilities were severely damaged by winds reported to be blowing near 170 mph, and the property has been closed until repairs can be completed. Tentative reopening date is March 31.

Castaway owner Geoffrey Shaw said he is putting the entire Castaway staff to work on the repairs. “If you were a bartender before the storm, you might now be a bricklayer,” Mr. Shaw told me by email.

My wife Linda and I visited Fiji over the holidays and spent three nights at Outrigger on the Lagoon – Fiji. As always, the staff there is very warm.
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Continued from page 1

and friendly. The property was running full, but service was smooth and efficient everywhere.

We had a chance to inspect the construction site of a new facility on the property, which will result in the addition of an adults-only pool with a swim-up bar and an adjacent 120-seat banquet facility.

To everyone at Outrigger on the Lagoon – Fiji, VINAKA for making our stay with you so memorable. 🌸

Dr. Kelley and Tamarisi Ratulevu
Sundowner staff get the restaurant ready for business after the cyclone
Leilani literally swam to work!

Resort Mgr. Russell Blaik, Pool Project Site Foreman Akbar Nabi and Dr. Kelley
Singing the traditional farewell song “Isa Lei” upon Dr. & Mrs. Kelley’s departure