Chaminade University honors Jean Rolles

By Drs. Chuck Kelley and Richard Kelley

Chaminade University inducted Jean Rolles into its Silversword Hall of Fame at the 7th Annual Intercollegiate Athletics Gala last Thursday, Feb. 19, at the Ala Moana Hotel, recognizing her years of tireless work in support of its athletic program.

As Outrigger’s vice president of community relations, Jean has been extraordinarily active in many nonprofit organizations that benefit our community. She currently serves on 12 local boards, including the Hawaii State Chapter of the American Red Cross, Honolulu Museum of Art, Japan-American Society and The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii.

Chaminade’s recognition is only one in a string of honors that grateful community organizations have heaped on Jean in recent years. These include the Hawaii Arts Alliance Alfred Preis Award, Punahou School’s Charles S. Judd, Jr. ‘38 Humanitarian Award, and being named a YWCA of O‘ahu Leader Luncheon Honoree.

Jean began her relationship with Chaminade as a graduate student. Studying late at night and on weekends in what she calls her “spare time,” in 1993 she completed a master’s degree in Japanese business studies, which included learning to speak Japanese.

Recognizing her boundless energy and passion for community work, the university invited her to serve on its board of regents. There, her “hands on” and “get it done” style quickly made her a driving force behind many significant improvements to the university’s athletics programs, including the Carlson Fitness Center.

Like her siblings Richard and Pat, Jean grew up in the hotel business under the watchful eyes of her parents, Roy and Estelle Kelley. From an early age they had her checking in guests and taking care of business at the Islander Hotel, the very first in the Outrigger chain. The lessons she learned in those early years served her well as she went on to earn a degree in hotel management from the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration. From there, she and her husband, Chuck Rolles, created a chain of Chuck’s Steak Houses stretching across the United States.

In the early 1980s, Jean returned full-time to Outrigger, applying the many skills she had learned as both an hotelier and entrepreneur. For many years she headed Outrigger’s retail leasing activities, cultivating outstanding relationships with the company’s many tenants.

Today Jean maintains a non-stop schedule, starting early each morning with a tennis match and ending late in the evening after community board meetings. In her free time, Jean is an avid traveler, visiting many far-away, exotic destinations, often requiring arduous travel.

We are all exceptionally proud of Jean for her many accomplishments at Chaminade, elsewhere in our community and right here at Outrigger Enterprises. Congratulations, Jean! You’ve done it again! 🎉

See Jean Rolles’ acceptance remarks >> 2
Acceptance Remarks by Jean E. Rolles

“Thank you, Thank you. I am very humbled and deeply honored to be recognized tonight.

Most of all because it gives me a chance to say thank you to you all for your support of the Chaminade Athletic program.

The Athletic program is small but mighty but thanks to your support it has continually grown and become more sophisticated. Like a mouse who roared – we have national recognition! Thanks to our Maui Basketball Tournament, the win over Virginia put us on the map in 1982 and has received national news since then. From very humble beginnings, we now are able to field 6 women’s teams and 4 men’s teams in various sports, as well as qualify and play in Division II National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) sports. We have improved the coaching staff – to include a full time AD as well as trainers to support the athletes, added more scholarship support and most recently completed vastly improved training facilities with the completion of Carlson Fitness Center and lockers.

You would have been embarrassed to have seen what was serving as our changing facilities before. Visiting teams would choose to return to their hotels than change in our limited facilities.

All this has come about thanks to your support through this gala and the Chaminade Ahinahina Booster Club. As the saying goes “we have come a long way baby!” And again thanks to your support. At this point I want to say a special thank you to our athletes and coaches who have persevered with far less than their opposing teams. Chaminade’s can-do attitude is amazing. However, we are far from finished. Right now plans are in progress to create coaching offices, trainer facilities and visiting team support that should be completed by this fall semester on the lower level of the parking garage adjacent to Saint Louis’ new workout gym.

There is much more we could do and I wish I had a magic wand to move ahead projects like new tennis courts or a gym dedicated for Chaminade use only. However over the years we have learned patience and are proceeding one step at a time.

Facilities aren’t the real challenge – what concerns us the most is finding enough teams to play in order to qualify to be in Division II and travel funds. Being out here in the Pacific, it is hard to find teams willing to endure the travel, time and expense. In order to get teams to come this far, Chaminade must pay all the travel expenses for both the visiting teams and then for Chaminade to travel to the West Coast for reciprocal play. With Brigham Young University-Hawaii announcing the ending of their sports program in the next two years, it has limited opportunities for competition in Hawai‘i. This affects the willingness of teams to travel to Hawai‘i as they like to schedule 2 -3 matches if they come this far. So you can understand what keeps our Athletic Director Bill Villa up all night. Thank you, Bill, for your determination, persistence and wonderful smile to meet all these challenges.

Now in closing I would like to thank Brother Bernie Ploeger and the Board of Directors for their commitment and support to the Chaminade Athletic program. It would be too easy to not have an athletic program, but it is so worth it when one realizes that student athletes are a vital part of campus life. In order to participate they keep up their grades, keep out of trouble and their retention is far better than the average student. Student athletes complete Bachelor’s degrees at a higher rate than non-athletes.

Additionally, our teams are a great marketing tool to bring awareness of our small school and are a way to attract financial support. Athletes enhance campus life, create school spirit and all the teams take on community projects. Team cooperation and bonding result in friendships that last a lifetime and produce loyal alums to support the school in later years.

I could go on forever as I am passionate about sport benefits, but I think you all understand as your presence here tells me so. So thank you once again for caring and supporting our Chaminade athletes, staff and school. And mahalo again for providing this opportunity for me to tell a little about our mighty athletic program, and I ask for your continued support.”