A MESSAGE FROM RICHARD R. KELLEY TO OUR OUTRIGGER ‘OHANA

Tourism Awards in Fiji

By Dr. Richard Kelley

I am delighted to learn that many members of the Outrigger ‘ohana in Fiji and Castaway Island’s Asian fusion restaurant, 1808, were honored for their leadership in Fiji’s tourism industry at the 17th annual AON Fiji Excellence in Tourism Awards dinner last week.

This exciting event drew over 400 of the leaders in Fiji’s Travel & Tourism industry to honor those companies, organizations and individuals who made exceptional contributions to the industry in 2013. Outrigger’s two Fiji properties were finalists for many of the top awards.

Outrigger on the Lagoon - Fiji was a finalist in the following categories:
- Best Restaurant – Ivi
- Deluxe Accommodation
- Luxury Accommodation
- Best Fiji Experience
- Frontliner of the Year – Praveena Dewan (Bebe Spa Manager)
- Back of House Employee of the Year – Executive Chef Shailesh Naidu

Castaway Island was a finalist in the following categories:
- Best Restaurant – 1808
- Deluxe Accommodation
- Frontliner of the Year – Pauliasi Delana (Reservations Manager)
- Services and Support to the Tourism Industry – Executive Chef Lance Seeto

Castaway Island’s Asian Fusion restaurant, 1808, won the Best Restaurant title in a very competitive field.
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1808 is a unique restaurant. It has no walls or ceiling but is an area on the beach in front of Castaway Island Resort with tables and chairs in the sand. The food is prepared by a line of chefs on tables and grills nearby under the guidance of Executive Chef Lance Seeto.

The restaurant's name, 1808, recalls the year in which the first Chinese arrived in Fiji aboard the American brig Eliza. In June 1808, the vessel was transporting a cargo of muskets and gunpowder from Sydney to China with the hope of returning with a load of sandalwood but was wrecked off Nairai Island in the eastern part of Fiji. The crew, part of which was Chinese, remained in the islands.

Fast forward to 2014, and 1808's executive chef is Lance Seeto. Born in Papua New Guinea of Chinese-Australian heritage, he was inspired to learn the basics of cooking by his grandmother in Melbourne, Australia. In his tasty, nutritious, exotic offerings, Chef Seeto blends Indian and Chinese culinary influences into the captivating flavors of Fiji and the Pacific.

The multi-talented Chef Seeto not only designs and supervises the restaurants at Castaway Island but is the host and presenter of Fiji TV's top-rated adventure series, *Taste of Paradise*, which is seen weekly in 13 countries across the South Pacific and Papua New Guinea. He writes a regular food column for the *Fiji Times*. Also an excellent photographer, he is currently putting the finishing touches on a book, *Coconut Bliss – a memoir, cookbook and inspirational story of life living with an ancient culture.*

Warmest congratulations to Chef Seeto and the staff of 1808 on this magnificent, well-deserved award and additional congratulations to everyone in our Fiji operations for ranking as finalists for so many other important awards. What a great team!
Geoffrey Shaw Receives Visionary Award
By Richard Kelley

I was very pleased to learn that Geoffrey Shaw was honored with the Fiji Tourism Visionary Award at the AON Excellence in Fiji Tourism event last week. It was a very special occasion, which recognized Geoffrey’s innumerable and significant contributions to the development and growth of Fiji’s Travel & Tourism industry. His lovely wife Megan and many members of the vuvale (family) at Castaway Island and Outrigger on the Lagoon · Fiji were thrilled to be with him.

Geoffrey is an extraordinary individual. He first arrived in Fiji on a vacation in his late teens and fell in love with the Fijian people. In an interview with The Age.com (the online edition of one of Australia’s leading newspapers) several years ago, he said, “I saw the genuineness of friendship and hospitality. There have been huge changes politically and socio-economically but this hasn’t changed. It’s what creates the allure of the islands and puts Fiji apart from other Pacific Islands.”

Geoffrey thinks his experiences jackarooing (Aussie slang for working as an apprentice on a sheep or cattle ranch) and mixing with “very real people” in western New South Wales after he left his Sydney private school at age 15 were of huge value in his later business enterprises, which have included two popular restaurants in Sydney and managing a couple of Queensland resorts.

The journey has not been easy. Political uprisings and cyclones among much else have created obstacles and major challenges along the way. But no matter what came along, Geoffrey has remained focused on helping Fiji’s Travel & Tourism industry grow and provide a wide range of job opportunities and economic development for everyone.

After 40 years of outstanding contributions to Fiji’s tourism industry, this award is richly deserved. Congratulations, Geoff, my friend. We are delighted that you will continue your relationship with Outrigger as a consultant. We still have lots to do! Vinaka vaka levu!