Danny Ojiri
Receives Chairman’s Award

I was delighted to join members of our ‘ohana at the Po’okela Awards ceremony on Wednesday. Here’s what I said, as I presented the 2008 Chairman’s Award.

Aloha!

One of the things I love best about my job is to be with you while we celebrate excellence among Outrigger employees. My special treat each year is to be able to personally present the Chairman’s Award.

That award is a great tradition at Outrigger. Over the years, the Chairman’s Award has been presented to a member of Outrigger’s senior executive team who has distinguished him- or herself through exceptional contributions to the success of our company.

2008 is the 20th anniversary of the Chairman’s Award, which I started in 1988, so it is fitting that on this special anniversary, we also recognize the past honorees. They are some of the finest people I have known in my life. Every one of them has been an individual whose actions and results exemplify The Outrigger Way. Past recipients include: Fran Kirk, Tom Burke, Bill Sthay Michael Devich, Joe Durocher, Perry Sorenson, Mel Wilinsky, Mel Kaneshige, Barry Wallace, Max Sword, Dorsey Brady, Alan White, Barbara Campbell, and Chuck Shishido.

So I’d like to take a moment to recognize each past honoree who is here with us today. As I do, please stand and be recognized, so we may present you with a lei. Thank you! Let’s give them all one more round of applause.

For 2008, I am pleased to present the Chairman’s Award to Vice President – Japan Sales, Danny Ojiri.

Danny joined Outrigger as Director of Sales - Japan almost 10 years ago to the day—March 30, 1998. He was promoted to Vice President in June 2007.

Before coming to Outrigger, Danny had spent most of his career at Jetour Hawaii, working on the “buy” side, dealing with hotels, resorts, and other services.

When Danny joined Outrigger, we promised him an adventure. And what an adventure it has been! Danny came on board at a time when we were embarking on a journey toward growth in Hawaii, expansion in the Pacific, and significant changes in our Outrigger product and brand.

Many of our managers had little or no first-hand experience in working with Japanese customers and guests, and few, if any, had traveled to Japan and developed an understanding of Japanese expectations in either business relationships or hospitality.

As we grew and expanded, Danny introduced new customers to Outrigger. He also always took great care to make the internal sale and to work with our hotels to deliver on operational promises.

Those of us who know Danny, are aware that he is a person who likes to do his homework and plan ahead. But Danny has also learned to embrace change and has dealt smartly with all the sudden twists and turns of our evolving portfolio, technology, and today’s challenging economic climate. As author Spencer Johnson might say – “Somebody is always moving his cheese.” But Danny has always found a way to make the best of these many changes. Just to recall a few:

1. He helped to reposition Outrigger as a first-class brand and established a Japanese service desk at our Outrigger Waikoloa resort. Then, he had to maintain the relationships he had developed when the property transitioned to a Marriott flag.

2. He made the Islander Hotel a home-away-from-home for visiting staff from Japan Travel Bureau (JTB), positioning and then repositioning the hotel before and after redevelopment, and then through its closing.

3. He helped us introduce the Embassy Suites® brand in Japan – a place where the brand stewards from Embassy Suites’ corporate offices had rarely set foot – and made the new and unfamiliar brand a hit with key operators and media in Japan.

4. He helped us to put Waikiki Beach Walk on the map – literally – in Japan.

5. He struggled with us through the transitions on Lewers Street, as Waikiki Beach Walk® and other numerous construction projects were completed.
Our exit from OHANA Maile Sky Court and our endless negotiations with owners of the OHANA Waikiki Malia about the now approved renovation plan were also handled with grace.

He helped to successfully add and reposition the Ala Moana and the OHANA Waikiki Beachcomber hotels.

During all this time, Danny managed to quietly grow our market share from Japan, always keeping us a step ahead of the market.

Over the past couple of years, we have also made breakthroughs in technology and established computer connectivity with two of our major Japan producers, JTB and HIS, both industry firsts in Hawaii and Guam.

And with the support of our IT team, we had another global first last year, when we went live on the home page of Japan Airlines, JAL.com, the leading travel site in Japan. Danny was instrumental in making the JAL website the success that it is today.

Danny’s effectiveness is appreciated by all of us here at Outrigger and OHANA hotels. His work puts him in daily communication with many properties and departments throughout the company. Everyone knows that if it involves the Japanese customer, Danny is the “go to” man to solve a problem – and, he always does, quietly and quickly!!

As our growth continues, even through these troubled times, Danny has willingly taken on increased responsibility to support our Asia region, as well as Hawaii and Guam. And he has developed a very effective team in our Japan Sales department to keep us moving forward.

As the adventure continues, we know we can count on Danny and his team to keep us pointed in the right direction. Congratulations, Danny, I am pleased to present you with the Chairman’s Award for 2008.