Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort Opens:
A Great Beginning
By Dr. Richard Kelley and Dr. Chuck Kelley

There was a great deal of excitement in Phuket, Thailand, this week as Outrigger Enterprises Group celebrated the opening of the luxurious Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort. Present at the celebration of this newly renovated 255-room, full-service resort were many top executives including David Carey, Dr. Richard Kelley, Dr. Chuck Kelley, Bitsy Kelley, Mel Kaneshige, Darren Edmonstone, Hans Weger and others.

The Opening Day events were magnificently scheduled and orchestrated, starting early in the afternoon with blessings from both the Buddhist and Muslim communities. As the official ceremony began, Kaipo Ho took the stage, discussing Hawaiian values and offering blessings.

All were honored as Phuket Province Governor Maitri Inthusut flew in specifically for the event, and together with Darren Edmonstone, Outrigger’s managing director, Asia-Pacific, cut a rope made of pikake buds to signal the official opening moment.

The celebrations began with traditional Thai dances and progressed into an exciting evening with live band music, acrobatic aerialists performing flips, turns and twists, and a sumptuous array of food and drink stations around the lagoon-sized swimming pool. Late in the evening the event culminated with a booming fireworks display shot from the beach and exploding right over the guests’ heads.

Congratulations are in order for the entire Phuket team for making this all possible. Darren Edmonstone and his team worked hard for many months to be sure that the extensive renovation would be done on time. It was a tight schedule, and everyone, both management and staff, worked overtime. While we were there, we observed Resort Manager Jim Heather, General Manager Christoph Berger, and Executive Chef Roberto Conrad working night and day. We know that every single employee went overboard to make this opening happen in a way that made us all proud.

Before and after the opening ceremony, Kaipo Ho had the opportunity to work with the staff, leading sessions on Outrigger and the blending of cultural values, which are very similar to the Thai values expressed through MITTRAPAB.

We also all had a chance to study the destination and market. We observed that Phuket is enjoying a tremendous comeback. The devastating December 2004 tsunami is now just a memory, and visitors from the UK, Germany, Scandinavia and Russia are enjoying Phuket’s tropical climate alongside travelers from Australia and New Zealand, Taiwan, China, Japan, Indonesia and other
parts of Southeast Asia and Oceania. In 2012, over 4.7 million visitors passed through the Phuket airport, the second-busiest in passenger operations in all of Thailand, and the hospitality sector is growing rapidly, with nine new hotels opening this year alone.

Walking up and down the long white-sand beach, we observed a predominance of European travelers who seem to really enjoy sunbathing and building sandcastles with their children. For the more active, there are tons of activities close by, from elephant riding and ATV (all-terrain vehicle) adventures to paragliding and Jet Ski rentals right off the beach. The more sedate can enjoy a spectacular range of spas, health and wellness facilities, or just a massage on the beach, which can be purchased for about US$10 an hour.

The food scene around Phuket is amazing, with global ethnic influences, but outstanding dining is found right on property in all of its new restaurants.

The hotel’s Locavore restaurant emphasizes seasonality, sustainability and traceability through education and a close relationship with local farmers, fishermen and suppliers. The entrees are fantastic, and the freshly made breads and pastries are unforgettable.

Metzo's Bistro, designed like a Thai pier house, serves marvelous Mediterranean dishes suitable for family dinners.

Convenient and casual dining can also be found at the Edgewater bistro, which sits literally on the edge of the huge swimming pool and overlooks Bangtao Beach. The whole family can enjoy a wood-fired pizza there after careening down the waterslide.

With the acquisition and opening of the Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort, our company now has an iconic property in Thailand’s most popular resort destination, where we can proudly provide authentic local hospitality. Early indications are that the new property will do very well in the family, couples and active lifestyle segment of the global holiday market.

This is Outrigger’s fourth property in Asia. Two of the three others are also in Thailand – the neighboring Outrigger Laguna Phuket Resort and Villas (offering residential-style luxury accommodations) and the Outrigger Phi Phi Island Beach Resort, about an hour away by boat – while the O-CE-N Bali by Outrigger is on the picturesque Indonesian island of Bali.

We sincerely thank everyone who worked so hard and did such a terrific job getting this property up and running.
Kaipo Ho was deeply honored to officiate a Hawaiian blessing as part of the day's cultural traditions and celebrations.

Dr. Chuck presented a special gift of Kekaulai'o to Phuket Governor Maitri Inthusut as a gesture of hospitality and gratitude from the employees of Outrigger Enterprises in Hawai'i to the people of Phuket for the privilege and honor of doing business in their country.

Above and below: Muslim spiritual leaders offered blessings of spiritual and physical enrichment.

Above: Buddhist monks prayed for blessings of prosperity and success for the resort and its staff.
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Photos of the festivities:
Top left: A striking Thai dancer
Top right and above: Spectacular fireworks cap off the opening of the Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort
Above right: A beautiful cultural Thai dance
Right: Aerialists perform during the evening’s celebration
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Bitsy and Kaipo at an employee bulletin board, which includes copies of “Saturday Briefing,” ‘OhanaGrams and other information about MITTRAPAB, employees and activities

The Kelley Family: Greg Shaw, Bitsy Kelley, Linda Jane Kelley, Dr. Chuck Kelley, Dr. Richard Kelley, Kathy Carey and David Carey

Baby elephant Candy greets Dr. Richard Kelley and Linda Jane Kelley

Kathy Carey, Mel Kaneshige and his wife Dr. Nancy Pace

Director of Human Resources Khun Taen and Dr. Richard Kelley share lunch in the staff dining room at Outrigger Laguna Phuket Beach Resort

Bitsy and Kaipo at an employee bulletin board, which includes copies of “Saturday Briefing,” ‘OhanaGrams and other information about MITTRAPAB, employees and activities

Dr. Chuck and Resort Manager Jim Heather
Floral artistry around the property is amazing! ...and so is the fruit carving!

A warm welcome at the Front Desk

Staff prepare to dig into delicious goat curry after the Muslim ceremony

Dr. Chuck with APAC corporate staff

Front Office staff
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Mel puts a small square of gold leaf on the Buddha for good luck.

Thailand is known for craftsmanship and intricate carvings can be found throughout the resort.

Khun Chai is a master at creating beautiful towel art!

Kathy Carey, Khun Nok and Connor Carey

Resort exterior shots

The beach fronting the resort

A long-tail boat passes in front of the resort while a fisherman looks on.

The resort lobby

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