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

June 6, 1944 – What have we learned?
By Dr. Richard Kelley

The date on this issue of Saturday Briefing is June 6. This may have little significance to the millennial generation, but for me this date inevitably brings back boyhood memories and prompts serious reflection about World War II because it was on this day in 1944 that the United States and its allies launched the massive Normandy invasion. This was the first step in the liberation of German-occupied Western Europe and the defeat of the Nazis. Just recently, I had a chance to talk about that day with a neighbor, friend and writer, Mort Marks, who is just a few years older than I, but was old enough back then to be drafted into the U.S. Army and subsequently dropped onto French shores in 1944.

I was just 11 years and 5 months old on June 6, 1944, and, in that pre-television era, it was several weeks before I watched film clips of the invasion on a Movietone News segment played in the Waikīkī Theater in Honolulu. Today, one can watch some of those clips and many others on the Internet almost instantly. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIjmOcp_xhQ)

A little less than a year after the allied forces landed in France, Nazi Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945. Two months and one week later, on August 14, 1945, Imperial Japan announced its unconditional surrender and the nightmare of World War II came to an end.

That news triggered instant celebrations in all the allied nations, including spontaneous parades and caravans up and down Kalākaua Avenue in Waikīkī, which my family and I watched up close with joy and amazement. Local photographer, writer and publisher Richard Sullivan found films that his father had taken of the celebrations in Waikīkī, and they can be seen at https://vimeo.com/5645171.

So, on this 71st anniversary of June 6, 1944, my thanks to Mort Marks and millions of other American servicemen and -women who, on that day and/or in the years that followed, have given so much to ensure our peace and freedom.

Unfortunately, the list of conflicts, battles and wars since the close of World War II does not speak well for the inheritors of this legacy. However, the continuing growth of Travel & Tourism around the world offers hope.

There is no question in my mind that international travel contributes to understanding and cooperation, a cleaner environment, and the preservation of physical and cultural heritage, and that thanks to these, it helps bring about a more peaceful and sustainable world. As emphasized by the International Institute for Peace Through Tourism, every traveler is a potential “Ambassador for Peace.”

As articulated by David Scowsill, president and CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council, “Travel is the language of peace. It brings people together and is a force and driver for peace. We must harness the opportunities in rebuilding reconciliation and justice.”

Let’s work together to realize that vision.

1 Mort Marks landed in France about three weeks after the Normandy invasion began. His unit’s mission was to capture the port of Le Havre. They then advanced across France, endured the fierce Battle of the Bulge and finally linked up with Russian troops in eastern Germany two weeks before the Nazi surrender.

2 As important as the Allied offensive, led by the U.S. and UK, was in liberating Western Europe and defeating German aggression, it’s worth recalling that the brunt of the effort to crush the Nazis was borne by the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front, where the Red Army recaptured the vast territory seized by the Germans in 1941-42 and advanced from 1943 to 1945 some 1,400 miles from Stalingrad (now renamed Volgograd) to Berlin at a cost of approximately 10 million military deaths alone. This contrasts with total U.S. military casualties during the war, both in Europe and the Pacific, of some 417,000.

3 The estimated total death toll of World War II is some 50 to 70 million around the world, perhaps as many as three quarters of them civilians.