Independence Day 2010  
By Dr. Richard Kelley

Independence Day in the U.S.A. means different things to different people. For countless Americans, the Fourth of July means a day off, an afternoon at the beach, and hot dogs on the grill. In Waikiki, it’s really going to be busy! Hotel rooms are all but sold out, and the sidewalks of Kalakaua Avenue are packed. There’s a canoe race in front of the Outrigger Waikiki. At The Waikiki Beach Walk®, the restaurants are competing in the Loco Moco Smack Down, while musicians are dueling on stage in the First Annual Hawaiian Steel Guitar Festival.

I’ll admit to enjoying steel guitars, an occasional hot dog, and a booming fireworks display. However, for me, this coming weekend is always a time for reflection, admiration, and giving thanks to those who have sacrificed or are currently sacrificing greatly to establish and protect the freedoms we take for granted in the United States of America.

I was reminded last Monday when I had dinner with a family with roots in Hungary, just how precious our freedom is. Hungary was overrun and all but destroyed during World War II by the German Nazi regime. Then followed an equally cruel period under Soviet domination. In 1956, brave men and women gave their lives in the streets of Budapest to begin the overthrow of the Soviets and restore some of the freedoms we enjoy daily in America.

I particularly remember those times because, in 1957, while working at the Massachusetts General Hospital, I became friends with two Hungarian physicians who described how they were able to slip through the barbed wire and past the machine guns to escape years of oppression to come to a land of freedom and opportunity.

During my lifetime, through TV, magazines, and newspapers, I have seen others lose their freedom to zealots and dictators. The Nazis systematically eliminated millions of Jews during World War II. Untold numbers disappeared during the Communist times in the Soviet Union and China.

I remember seeing firing squads dispatch businessmen in Cuba. I gasped when I saw the photos of row after row of the skulls of Cambodian citizens killed under Pol Pot. I’ll never forget the faces of desperate Vietnamese clinging to the closed gates of the U.S. embassy grounds in Saigon, as the last helicopter left from the embassy rooftop.

Today we watch as North Koreans starve. The photos of Neda Agha-Soltan dying in a pool of blood on a street in Tehran during last year’s uprisings in Iran have galvanized many as did the movie, The Stoning of Soraya M., which described the brutal execution by stoning of a 35-year-old Iranian woman for alleged infidelity.

The world today is more dangerous than ever before. A radical Islamic movement is actively and aggressively trying to eliminate the freedoms and lifestyles enjoyed by most of the western nations in the world.

As we celebrate, relax, and enjoy this weekend, I hope we all remember that brave men and women from the U.S. and other countries are, at the same moment, risking their lives in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq to stem that tide.

However, technology has changed the scope and possibility of terror drastically. No longer do aggressors have to mount thousands of troops, armor, and catapults. A few ounces of explosive strapped to a suicide bomber can kill hundreds in a restaurant, shopping center, or hotel lobby.

Continued on page 2
The politics have changed, too. As predicted by scholars and writers years ago, in the free world, the percentage of citizens who are net receivers of government programs, subsidies, and benefits has come to equal the percentage who are the net givers to government through taxes, fees, and other charges. This has led to a growing government, which is not serving the people but rapidly taking freedom and choice away from all.

Exhibit Number One of this trend is the recently passed U.S. health care law that will shift trillions of dollars from one class of citizens to another and fine individuals and employers who would like not to participate.

The ugly details of the multi-thousand-page law are just starting to be understood.

What will we find as the new health care regulations are put into effect?

I think it is vital that everyone in the U.S.—whether you are a man or women; whether you affiliate with Democrats, Republicans, the Tea Party, or are independent; whether you earn your living by working for someone else, run your own business, or are retired—stop this weekend and take a few moments to reflect on our nation and the world.

Remember the sacrifices of past generations who gave us our freedoms through their blood, sweat, and tears.

And, if you see a serviceman or servicewoman in our hotel elevators, lobbies, or corridors during the next few days, take a moment to say, “Aloha, and thanks for helping to keep us all free!”

Finally, vow that you, too, will personally do something in the coming months to preserve those freedoms for the next generations.

Remember what Thomas Paine said in 1776: “Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must undergo the fatigues of supporting it.”

Those words are still just as true on July 4, 2010, as they were then.

God bless the U.S.A.