Saluting our “Superhero” Housekeepers

During the coming two weeks, Outrigger and OHANA will honor our Housekeepers across the Pacific. Especially this year, with many properties experiencing near-record occupancies month after month, we will proudly recognize our Housekeeping staff and thank them for everything they do to keep our rooms and public areas looking as great as they do.

Though they work quietly, far from the limelight, our Housekeepers do a magnificent job. They perform their duties flawlessly 24/7/365—all day, every day of the week, throughout the year, even on Christmas Day.

Regular readers of Saturday Briefing are probably aware that I have a special place in my heart for the Housekeeping staff. I am sure this has something to do with the fact that I started my hotel career 59 years ago folding towels in the Housekeeping storage room of the little Islander Hotel on Seaside Avenue in Waikiki.

Readers may also recall that during Housekeepers Week, I often seek a metaphor for the vital role that Housekeepers play in the success of our hotels. This year, I think the word “superheroes” really captures the spirit of our Housekeepers.

A superhero is defined as “a hero possessing extraordinary, often magical powers.” Many think that superheroes are only fictional characters appearing in comic books and animated films. As children, each of us had our favorite superhero – Superman, Batman, The Green Hornet, The Shadow and, more recently Spider-Man. Superheroines include Wonder Woman, Invisible Woman, Elektra, Catwoman, and the modern “X-Women” such as Storm, Shadowcat, Rogue, and others.

What is common to all these heroes and heroines is great achievements, a sense of responsibility, dedication to service, personal sacrifice, compassion, integrity, honesty, and even a sense of humor.

Those qualities certainly apply to the members of the Outrigger and OHANA Housekeeping teams.

There is no question that our Housekeepers are great achievers. Every morning they go forth to tackle 16 rooms or the equivalent in public areas. By the end of the day, everything has to be perfect and ready for guests arriving from all parts of the world. There are thousands of details that need attention. Only great achievers can do this job with consistently high performance day after day, month after month, and year after year.

Our Housekeepers also have a great sense of responsibility. They generally work alone and take full charge of their assigned guest rooms or public areas. They are proud of what they do and do not need a supervisor looking over their shoulder to make sure they do their job right.

Housekeepers are clearly dedicated to serving others. They often make personal sacrifices by working odd hours and irregular shifts. They are also willing to tackle the really tough jobs that no one else wants to do. Many of these jobs cannot be postponed to another day. Think how guests would react if we told them, “We’ll make up your room tomorrow and touch up the lobby later this week!”

Housekeepers are compassionate, and they show it in many ways. They help others in our community through volunteer service and fundraising. Every year, they turn out in large numbers for the annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk.

The honesty and integrity of our Housekeepers is legendary. Every day, our guests leave valuables and personal effects in the care of our Housekeepers. In my nearly six decades in the hospitality business, I have hardly ever seen that trust violated.

Finally, if you look carefully at the fictional superheroes, you will discover a great deal of subtle humor in even the most critical of times. Much of the dialogue between Batman and his sidekick Robin is quite funny, as were the lines exchanged between Superman’s alter ego Clark Kent and his girlfriend Lois Lane. So it is with our Housekeepers. I enjoy attending the morning briefings of the Housekeeping staff because there is always a great deal of humor and laughter.

This is an important quality because in the hotel business, things do not always go as planned. Groups arrive early. The plumbing clogs up. Fresh linen from the laundry fails to arrive on time—or at all. When this happens, our Housekeepers usually approach the situation with a great deal of patience, sprinkled with lots of humor.

So, are our Housekeepers superheroes? Absolutely! To accomplish everything they do, they must be faster than a speeding bullet and, as a team, more powerful than a locomotive. Can they leap tall buildings in a single bound? Perhaps not, but they do scale our hotels floor by floor every day and perform miracles equal to or exceeding anything done by the fictional characters we know so well.

To all of our Housekeepers … Domo Arigato, Fāafetai, Kamsahannida, Mahalo, Maururu, Merci, Salamat, Si Yu’us Ma’ase, Thank You, Tika Hoki, Vinaka Vakelevu, Xie Xie! Have a great week! You’ve truly earned our respect!