Hawaii Five-0: Changing of the Guard

By Richard R. Kelley

I was deeply saddened last week to hear of the death of James MacArthur, who played the role of Danny “Danno” Williams on TV’s original Hawaii Five-0 series. The news brought back a number of memories about the 70s and 80s when Five-0 was one of the top shows on television.

James MacArthur was a personal friend of my wife Linda and I. He was a perfect gentleman and a fine father. He and his wife H.B. used to bring their young son, Jamie, over to our home in Honolulu to play with our two youngest children, Chris and Anne. James, H.B., and I also occasionally played golf together. H.B. had played on the LPGA circuit and was very patient with my high handicap level of play. I’m sure there will be many who will miss James deeply.

I also knew Jack Lord, who played Detective Steve McGarrett in the original Five-0 series, and his wife Marie. Jack was extremely dedicated to his craft. When they were filming, he would be focused on nothing else, shooting scenes all day, and then returning home to memorize the script for the next day.

In addition, I got to know Gilbert Lani Kauhi, “Zulu,” who played Kono Kalakaua, McGarrett’s burly detective. Zulu also performed with The Alii’s in a number of Waikiki nightclubs and showrooms, including the Outrigger Waikiki’s Main Showroom.

Al Harrington, a great friend who headlined at the Polynesian Palace in our Reef Tower hotel, played Detective Ben Kokua who replaced Kono. Another acquaintance, Hawai’i football star Herman Wedemeyer, played HPD Officer Duke Lukela.

I can’t say that I really knew Kam Fong who played the part of detective Chin Ho Kelly. His stage name came from a combination of the names of our company’s founder, Roy Kelley, and Chinn Ho, the Hawaii businessman who owned a good portion of the Ilikai Hotel (where many Five-0 scenes were shot).

According to legend, the idea for the show may have originated from a conversation between producer Leonard Freeman and then-Governor John A. Burns. Others say it can be traced to discussions that Freeman had with actor Richard Boone, star of the TV series Paladin. Boone was a great friend of Hawai’i and competed in the International Billfish Tournament in Kona for many years. Freeman is said to have offered Richard Boone the role of McGarrett, but he turned it down. The job went to Jack Lord, a long-time friend of Freeman’s.

Those were the early days of using Hawai’i as the setting for a TV series, and, as with any start-up, there were innumerable difficulties. Jack Lord’s perfectionist personality demanded that everyone do their best, and according to New York Times, everyone in the cast and on the production crew admitted they all turned out better because of it.

Those were exciting years in Waikiki, and there’s no question in my mind that the scenes of Hawai’i shown every week on TV from 1968 to 1980, plus countless reruns, had terrific publicity value and contributed significantly to the flow of tourists to the 50th State.

Other TV series filmed in Hawai’i followed Five-0 and also helped. These include Flight 29 Down, Hawaiian Eye, Magnum PI, Dog the Bounty Hunter, and Lost.

Hawai’i has also been used as a location to film many movies. After the Edgewater Hotel was completed in 1951, we provided rooms to John Wayne, while he filmed In Harm’s Way and Donovan’s Reef. (The Edgewater was located on the site now occupied by the Embassy Suites’ hotel.)

Continued on page 2
Elvis Presley was the star when *Blue Hawaii* was filmed in Hawai‘i. *Pearl Harbor, Tora, Tora, Tora,* and *Jurassic Park* are just a few of the many subsequent films shot here. The beautiful valley at Kualoa Ranch on O‘ahu is a favorite location for filming anything that requires a lush tropical setting.

The new *Hawaii Five-0* series that debuted seven weeks ago is an exciting but different show from the original. Alex O’Loughlin’s Detective McGarrett does not come across as intense as Jack Lord’s character, but certainly is credible and enjoyable. Scott Caan’s Danno is a lot more aggressive and cantankerous than James MacArthur’s. However, their love-hate relationship and on-screen chemistry make it attractive to today’s new audience. Kono Kalakaua is now played by the lovely Grace Park, Kelly’s cousin in the show. The story line says she was hired to do undercover work because the “bad guys” wouldn’t know her.

Today’s modern technology has made Hawai‘i’s scenery absolutely gorgeous and inviting. Pictures of the mountains, the ocean, and local activities are fantastic. I’m sure that the new Five-0 has already had an impact on Hawai‘i and will continue to do so throughout its run.

Steve McGarrett, Danno, Chin Ho, and Kono: Welcome back to Hawai‘i. We’ve missed you and hope you have a long and successful run!