I’ve often been asked which of the 37 properties in our Outrigger portfolio is my favorite. My response is always, “Well, what is your favorite ice cream flavor? Vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, pistachio? Each is excellent in its own way.”

And so it is for one of my “favorites,” Castaway Island, Fiji Resort, which is certainly very special in a number of ways. I’m happy to report that yesterday a five-star cocktail party was the culmination of a month of festivities for guests and hosts as the resort celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The party was attended by the Honorable Faiyaz Koya, Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Minerals; Matthew Stoeckel, CEO of Tourism Fiji; and Outrigger Enterprises Group representatives David and Kathy Carey, Paul Richardson, Ruthann Yamanaka and Andrew Gee. While I was unable to join the celebration, I don’t want to miss this opportunity to convey bula (a warm greeting, Fiji’s counterpart to Hawai’i’s aloha) and vinaka (thank you) to General Manager Steven Andrews and the entire Castaway Island vuvale (family).

Former Castaway owner Geoff Shaw was also in attendance. Geoff bought the resort in 1992, transformed it into one of the South Pacific’s best and then sold it to Outrigger in 2014. It was Geoff’s vision for Castaway Island that gave birth to the term “Fijian ‘barefoot’ luxury hospitality,” which has given rise to a phenomenal return guest rate of 40 percent. Geoff has fond memories of his early days as owner of the resort. “It was just wonderful. They were the happiest, funniest and most wonderfully productive times. There were also times of trauma and natural disaster when everyone jumped in and got the job done. You create a bond that never breaks,” he said. “The only problem I had on Castaway was that the sun didn’t

Dr. Richard Kelley

NOVEMBER 19, 2016

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

One of my ‘favorites’
By Dr. Richard Kelley

Preparations underway for a big 50th!

Little warriors get in on the celebratory action!
One of my ‘favorites’ ... << From 1

come up soon enough. All I wanted to do was to get up and get into it."

For five decades, Castaway has welcomed guests to its white-sand beaches and turquoise waters, offering its unique blend of South Pacific tranquility and impeccable service and cuisine.

The resort’s history can also be traced through its hosts, some of whom have worked on the island for over three decades. Mere Kasaqa, originally from Navuso Village in Naitasiri and now retired, worked at Castaway Island for 32 years. She joined the resort at age 20 as a dining room waitress. When Geoff took over Castaway Island, he named her guest relations and duty manager, a position she held until retiring in 2010. Her tradition of service, however, lives on in her daughter Aseri Shimo Kasaqa, one of Castaway’s current duty managers.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, guests have been sporting sulus (Fijian sarongs), compliments of the resort, decorated with a design created by Irimaia Drua Toga, a student at Fiji National University’s Fine Arts Department. Irimaia won a Castaway Island design contest with an image of the island framed by the sun and highlighted by hibiscus, palm trees and a starfish. Talk about a signature experience!

Geoff, although no longer an owner, has remained a good friend and consultant to Outrigger. Castaway, he said, is the jewel in the crown of Fijian tourism. “It’s one of the few remaining private island resorts in Fiji and it has the potential to be taken to another level while retaining its charm. There are taller palm trees and better white sand beaches in other parts of the world,” he said, “but they don’t have the Fijians. That’s the thing.”

Steven said that as general manager he was extremely proud to host more than 300 guests on the island to mark the milestone. “My team worked tirelessly to bring this event to fruition, and I feel honored to be at the helm of this iconic resort at a significant time in its history.”

Congratulations on your 50th anniversary, Castaway Island, Fiji Resort! I couldn’t be prouder of one of my “favorites.”
One of my ‘favorites’... << From 2

Above and below: foto frame fun

Management cocktail party

Kava ceremony officially opening the celebrations

Fijian Warriors

Vuvale fun

Meke (traditional dance) practice

Steven Andrews welcomes Paul Richardson (COO) and Ben Johnson (Fiji director of sales and marketing)