Hospitality to the max – *kamaʻāinas* to the rescue

By Dr. Richard Kelley

In 1946, after World War II’s seven years of bloodshed and destruction, the first steps toward recovery were being taken around the globe. Civilian efforts in the Territory of Hawaiʻi included those of Roy and Estelle Kelley who, on Oʻahu, were scraping together scarce building materials and almost non-existent labor to build the Islander Hotel. On Kauaʻi, Walter Smith, Sr., and his wife Emily put a borrowed outboard motor on a rowboat and began taking visitors to the Fern Grotto on the Wailua River.

Fast-forward seven decades to 2016 and I will tell you a heartwarming story about how the descendants of these two entrepreneurial families recently cooperated to provide exceptional hospitality and service to a group of visitors from Colorado.

The second generation of these families, working in the companies started by their parents, includes Walter “Freckles” Smith, Jr., and myself. Freckles and I got to know each other very well during the 1970s, 80s and 90s. In those pre-internet days, members of Hawaiʻi’s Travel & Tourism industry had to go to the cities and countries where our visitors lived to carry the message of the enchantment of Hawaiʻi. Freckles and I took many trips together to cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Sydney, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Chicago and New York.

After the devastation of Hurricane Iniki on September 11, 1992, we were particularly busy, letting the world know that despite the storm’s damage, all of the Hawaiian Islands were open for business or soon would be.

Currently, the third generation of both families is working in the companies started by their grandparents. On Kauaʻi’s Wailua River heading toward the Fern Grotto or at the Smith Family Garden Luau, visitors will usually see Walter “Kamika” Smith III making sure everything is in perfect order.

On Oʻahu, drop in to Outrigger’s headquarters office or almost any popular visitor activity or important gathering of the Outrigger ‘ohana, and the chances are good that you will see a third generation member of the Kelley family.

Why am I telling you this? Is it just hoʻomalimali (Hawaiian for flattery or, in this context, self-promotion)? Not at all.

Earlier this year, I was getting my hair trimmed in Greenwood Village, near Denver, Colorado. My barber, Jolyn Hewitson, told me she was planning to get married on Kauaʻi in April and needed some advice on hotel accommodations. She had also invited the wedding party and some friends to a *lūʻau* and wanted to be sure they could sit together and not be scattered around the vast *lūʻau* grounds.

Unlike telecommunications in 1946 when one had to reserve a telephone booth and book a time to make a trans-Pacific call, I pulled out my cell phone and immediately spoke to Outrigger’s offices to make sure that...
Hospitality to the max... << From 1

the staff at Waipouli Beach Resort & Spa by Outrigger® would be ready for the arrival of the Hewitson–Covelli wedding party. “Please block their rooms in advance so everyone can be as close as possible. Order welcome amenities for their arrival.” And so on.

On my next call, I spoke with dear friend Freckles Smith who at that moment was riding around the lū’au grounds on a golf cart to be sure things were ready for that evening’s feast and entertainment. He promised that he would personally see that Jolyn, her fiancé Shane Covelli and their group would be seated together and enjoy an unforgettable evening.

I spoke with Jolyn a few days ago and got an enthusiastic report. “Everything was absolutely perfect! The staff at the Waipouli took care of our every need courteously and promptly. The lū’au was great, with fantastic entertainment and phenomenal food!”

She followed up with an email saying, “Kaua’i and the Islands are so magical. They are so hard to leave. Thanks again for making us part of your ‘ohana.”

Congratulations to the entire staff at Waipouli Beach Resort and everyone at the Smith Family Garden Luau. Seventy years have gone by and the spirit of hospitality and aloha is as powerful as ever.

Ed Case with Walter “Kamika” Smith III, Walter “Freckles” Smith, Jr., and the Smith family at the Small Business Awards

The Smith family at the Small Business Awards