At Outrigger® Hotels and Resorts, we have taken some time away from our regular duties over the past few days to honor our extraordinary Housekeeping team. At locations stretching across the Pacific and Indian oceans, from Hawai‘i to Mauritius, we are pausing to recognize those who work tirelessly every day of the year to keep our rooms and public areas looking great, and to thank them for everything they do.

Even 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, all year long, even on Christmas Day.

Regular readers of Saturday Briefing are probably aware that I have a special place in my heart for our Housekeeping staff. I am sure this has something to do with the fact that I started my hotel career 68 years ago folding towels in the Housekeeping Department of our company's first hotel, the five-story Islander at 351 Seaside Avenue, a block off Kalakāua Avenue in the heart of Waikīkī.

The Islander’s Housekeeping Department was not much to talk about. It was crammed into a small storage area behind the building. Racks with linen and towels lined three sides of the room. A 4-by-8-foot sheet of plywood mounted on “saw horses” in the center served as a table to fold towels that had been laundered in a row of residential-quality Kenmore washing machines purchased from a Sears Roebuck department store.

Since the Islander had no elevators, Housekeepers had to carry sheets and towels up and down five flights of stairs. But, there was more! They would also clean and make up rooms in numerous outlying cottages – annexes to the main hotel building – up to several city blocks distant. Heaven help them if they had to run back to get a pillowcase or towel that had somehow been forgotten. It happened to me on more than one occasion! But it certainly kept us all in tip-top physical shape!

That experience left a lasting impression on me and gave birth to the enormous respect I have for our Housekeepers. Readers may also recall that during Housekeepers Week, I usually seek a metaphor for the vital role that Housekeepers play in the success of our hotels. This year, I believe the term “Our Titans, Our MVPs” really captures our Housekeepers’ spirit.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says that a titan is one that “stands out for greatness of achievement.” That certainly describes our housekeepers both individually and as a team, particularly this year.

In the U.S. National Football League (NFL), life is not easy. Only those who are strong, skilled and dedicated succeed. A handful of the very best are named “Most Valuable Players” or MVPs.

Sometimes, MVPs are just fictional characters that appear in novels, movies and Internet games. Fortunately, there are also many real-life world champions who accomplish extraordinary feats in a wide range of pursuits, thus playing a significant role in improving the quality of life on our planet.

This year, Marcus Mariota, quarterback for the NFL’s Tennessee Titans, is a particularly noteworthy MVP. His full name is Marcus Ardel Taulauniu Mariota. Born in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, he grew up admiring the playing of Jeremiah Masoli, a fellow Samoan-American, who was a standout quarterback at Honolulu’s St. Louis School and, later, the University of Oregon.
Our Housekeepers ... << From 1

Marcus Mariota followed the same path and, for his many achievements, in 2012, he became the first Hawai'i-born athlete to be honored with the Heisman Trophy. “The Heisman” is awarded annually to the most outstanding player in U.S. college football, the athlete whose integrity and performance best embody the pursuit of excellence.

Reading about Marcus Mariota reminds me of the characteristics I find in our Housekeepers day after day and year after year:

• A strong work ethic
• Top skills
• A sense of responsibility
• A willingness to help others
• Honesty and integrity
• A sense of humor

Marcus Mariota would not be a champion without a combination of a strong work ethic, exceptional skills and a sense of responsibility. Our MVP Housekeepers are much the same.

Every morning they go forth to tackle the vital role of cleaning our guest rooms and public areas. By the end of the day, everything has to be perfect and ready for guests arriving from all parts of the world or returning from a day or evening enjoying the paradise of our host islands. Thousands of details demand our Housekeepers’ attention.

Only people with a strong work ethic and top skills can do this job with consistent MVP-level performance day after day, month after month, year after year.

Like many outstanding leaders, Marcus Mariota has developed traits and character that define him as a winner season after season.

• He is never satisfied with his own performance.
• He raises the bar of expectations for those around him.
• He knows his occupation inside and out, and adapts to new situations better than anyone.
• He is a classy, likable human being.

Our Housekeepers also have a great sense of personal responsibility for their jobs, their company and fellow employees. Like Marcus Mariota and other top athletes, dedicated scientists or brilliant authors, they focus on the job at hand. Housekeepers 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 it right.

Our Housekeepers have many other traits that make them MVPs throughout the communities where they live and work. They are compassionate and show it in many ways. They help others in our community through volunteer service and fundraising. Every year, they enthusiastically turn out in large numbers for the annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk on each of Hawai'i’s four major islands.

Our Housekeepers also are known for their honesty and integrity, and are, in fact, legendary in this area too. Every day, our guests leave valuables and personal effects in the care of our Housekeepers. In my 68 years in the hospitality business, I have hardly ever seen that trust violated.

Like most MVPs in all walks of life, our Housekeepers also know that humor is an important quality to keep at the ready. In the hotel business, as on the football field, things often fail to go as planned. Guests check out late. Groups arrive early. The plumbing clogs up. Fresh linen from the laundry fails to arrive on time – or perhaps it doesn’t arrive at all. When this happens, our MVPs usually approach the situation with a great deal of patience sprinkled with lots of humor.

So, are our Housekeepers MVPs?

Absolutely! To accomplish everything they do, they must turn in an MVP-quality performance day after day. The only difference between them and world champions in sports, business and the arts is that our Housekeepers do not get their stories, photos and achievements reported on the nightly TV news, printed on the front page of the newspaper or spread like wildfire all over the Internet.

However, once a year, we do pause for National Housekeepers Week to recognize what great people they are and how important and impressive everything they do for our company, their fellow workers and our guests.

So, to all of our Housekeepers ...

Domo Arigato, Faafetai, Kamsahamnida, Mahalo, Merci, Mauruuru, Salamat, Si Yu'us Ma'a'ase, Thank You, Tika Hoki, Vinaka Vakelevu, Xie Xie!

Have a great week! You have truly earned our respect and affection!

NOTE: More to come on our Housekeepers in upcoming issues of Saturday Briefing!

Never Forget

Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawai'i – 12/7/1941
New York City, NY • Shanksville, PA • Washington, DC • 9/11/2001

As we publish this week’s issue of Saturday Briefing, we remember these tragic events and pay respect and honor those whose lives were lost.

God Bless America.