



## ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

# Let's Not Have Another Blunder Like That

Hawai'i keeps making the national news. We got a headline in *The New York Times*. We were the talk of CNN. We were mocked on late-night talk shows. We were everywhere in the media world.

Was it because of the excellent quality of the visitor experience, our beautiful beaches and stunning weather, or our standing as an international business and convention destination?

Sadly, no. It was because of a blunder by emergency management in sending out a false text alert of an impending missile attack — and waiting far too long to correct the error. What followed was confusion and bewilderment. People in many places, including hotels, were asked to take shelter. Our 911 system was overwhelmed with calls. And now, as if to prolong the agony, the Federal Communications Commission is planning an investigation into this blunder.

In a previous column, I had encouraged our emergency management team to perhaps find another way of alerting our population rather than using the wailing sirens (not all of which functioned properly, I might add). There were many in the visitor industry who were not in favor of the siren-warning test in the first place, considering it alarmist. While the text alert was certainly less of an intrusion than a wailing siren, this latest misstep only compounds what might charitably be considered a lack of finesse in our emergency management system.

Hawai'i Lodging and Tourism Association is surveying its membership regarding this harrowing experience and staging a Tourism Public Safety workshop next month

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in Waikiki to identify ways in which we can be of help to state and county emergency personnel in coping with and ensuring the safety and welfare of our residents and visitors.

Let's fix the mistakes and tighten up our procedures so Hawai'i never makes the news again for the wrong reasons.

### **Taking Pride In Our Gridiron Heritage**

The quiet humility that I have been witnessing within the Samoan community in the aftermath of the tremendous accomplishments and achievements of Marcus Mariota, Tua Tagovailoa and Manti Te'o on the national stage has been nothing short of phenomenal. Many Samoans, like their Polynesian cousins, have always excelled in sports, and they have gone from standouts in high school to prominence in the college ranks, including winning a Heisman or being in contention for one, and more and more have earned fame and fortune in the NFL.

But what's been particularly gratifying is to see Samoan athletes now at the helm of their teams as quarterbacks and as a head coach of a major Division I team. Yes,

you'll recall Jack Thompson, the "Throwin' Samoan," who was a first-round draft pick of the Cincinnati Bengals. Now we have the amazing success of Mariota and the literal overnight success of Tagovailoa. Who would have thought that two of the most popular figures in the states of Tennessee and Alabama

would be Polynesians from Hawai'i! Then there is Naval Academy skipper Kenny Niumatalolo. The former signal-caller from Radford and UH is the winningest coach in Midshipmen history and has taken his team to a bowl game in nine of his 10 seasons.

Their athletic and coaching skills notwithstanding, the one outstanding common attribute of these individuals is their depiction of their upbringing in the "Fa'a Samoa" (The Samoan Way) tradition, which is to believe in God, pray always and give thanks, honor your parents, respect your culture and help others. The whole nation learned the meaning of "Fa'afetai Tele Lava" (thank you very much) when Marcus uttered those words upon receiving the Heisman. Many remarked that they were equally impressed with the loving em-

brace Tua gave to his parents as much as they were with his powerful arm. They also cited his unabashed faith in the power of prayer — similar traits that have also been manifested in Marcus, Manti and Kenny as well. All four also are highly respected by players and coaches because they are quick to deflect praise to others and it's never about "me," but always about "we."

They feel blessed about growing up in the 808. Individuals from Hawai'i's multi-cultural ethnic groups have all played a part in their development and maturation. Numerous non-Samoan coaches and myriad students they went to school with and played ball with have all made an indelible impact in their lives. That's why their success and good fortune in many ways is Hawai'i's suc-

cess and good fortune. They are living proof that people from Hawai'i can compete with the best and excel on the national level when given the opportunity.

For Samoans, at times the subject of bad news rather than good, this is a time to cherish and emulate. It's a moment of pride, a chance to admire the success of those who have worked hard to reach their goals, not necessarily in sports but in so many other aspects regarding character and values.

While we can't all be exceptional athletes, these standouts inspire us by their example and demonstrate that hard work, discipline and sacrifice are their own rewards, for Samoans and for anyone who has dreams and aspirations.

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**calendar girls** Written by Tim Firth

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