



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

HLTA Meeting Sets Stage For What's To Come

Conventions are a staple of organizations of all stripes. And so it is, too, with the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, the state's largest private-sector tourism organization.

We held our annual General Membership Meeting last month at member-hotel Four Seasons O'ahu at Ko 'Olina, thanks to general manager Charlie Parker and his exceptional staff. What we strived to accomplish was an event that was a special combination of communication, business, insight, networking and even entertainment.

Featured guests included Gov. David Ige, whom the HLTA endorsed in both elections and who spoke about this administration's support for the visitor industry. We also welcomed and heard from a number of candidates we endorsed for the November contests, including future Lt. Gov. Josh Green.

My state-of-the-industry remarks highlighted our accomplishments over the past year, largely our work in the political arena during the legislative session. But I also devoted considerable time discussing what our goals will be over the next year, including taking our crusade to resolve the illegal transit vacation rental situation to the counties rather than just relying on the state, advocating again for the passage of state legislation to create an airport corporation, awarding matching state funds to non-profit organizations engaged in combating homelessness, pressing for Ala Wai Canal flood mitigation, and en-



(From left) Robert Cazimero, Vicky Holt Takamine and Michael Pili Pang led the "Lunch and Learn" discussion at Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association's 2018 General Membership Meeting. PHOTO COURTESY HLTA

couraging and participating in discussions on how Hawai'i deals with this notion of "over-tourism."

We spotlighted the expansion of our philanthropic activities, including raising a record \$2.6 million through our 2018 Charity Walk, securing state matching funds to target homelessness, increasing scholarships to high school and college students interested in tourism careers, collecting donations for Kaua'i and Puna disaster relief, and unveiling our new Hawai'i Hotel, Restaurant and Travel Show in partnership with Hawai'i Restaurant Association and *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*. A full printed report is available on our October blog (hawaiiilodging.org).

At our lunch-and-learn session, through which we expose members to different ideas affecting the industry, we heard from a panel of artists on Hawaiian cultural is-

sues: Robert Cazimero, Vicky Holt Takamine and Michael Pili Pang, all of whom are prominent kumu hula.

The panelists revealed how their cultural backgrounds made them who they are today, spoke of how hula, music and culture are the cornerstones of building a cultural economy, and discussed the importance of maintaining an identity by understanding the past. Led by Nā Hōkū Hanohano-winner Cazimero, they also produced a show for us that had the soul and authenticity of Hawaiian music and dance, presented with the showbiz flair characteristic of these multitasking artists.

Another keynote speaker was Jerry Gibson, vice president and general manager of Turtle Bay Resort. A veteran of the hospitality industry, Jerry gave a terrific speech on the challenges confronting our industry, delivered with characteris-

tic Gibson wit and insight.

He pointed out changing Japanese travel practices could spell trouble for tour wholesalers, the continuing difficulty of doing business in the islands and the rising tax burden on visitors, caution on the part of developers to invest because of legislative threats to raise

taxes, the challenges of food and beverage service, the declining quality of our parks and other attractions, widespread homelessness in tourism areas, and a shortage of workers in many key occupations.

But Jerry also noted that these challenges are man-made, and so the solutions need to be man-made. He called for greater involvement by the industry in pushing for a greater say on how hotel room tax money is spent, educating government leaders, and generally taking a stronger role in developing future industry leaders and shaping our future.

All told, the success of our General Membership Meeting should provide ample inspiration for our endeavors in the months ahead.

Paty: The Consummate Community Leader

Hundreds attended Bill Paty's services held at Central Union Church recently. Bill, who died on Aug. 12

at age 97, was many things: a paratrooper on D-Day and a prisoner of war, Waialua Sugar Plantation manager for decades, president of the 1978 ConCon, chair of the Land Board for Gov. John Waihe'e, and a long-time respected community leader.

I served with him as a Waihe'e cabinet colleague and remember him fondly as a gentleman, humble public servant and man of faith willing to share his time and ideas with one and all.

I last spent quality time with him when Glenn Tomlinson and his Home of the Brave Museum in Kaka'ako honored Bill for his heroic actions in World War II that won him several medals of distinction that he always downplayed due to his humble and low-key nature. In fact, he resisted Tomlinson's overtures several times before he finally relented.

Our community will miss Bill Paty, for sure.

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