


ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

The Oscars Of Hospitality

With the arrival of the holidays, we should all take a moment to reflect on the year that was and give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon us.

From my perspective as the president and CEO of Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, there was much to be grateful for. We just completed our fifth record year of visitor arrivals and spending, and signs point to another positive year for tourism. As the most important economic driver and the prime source of private-sector employment in the Islands, it's clear that a healthy visi-

tor industry reaps enormous benefits for the entire state.

But that success is thanks to much more than our four S's: sun, sand, sea and surf. Yes, the natural beauty of the Hawaiian Islands has lured visitors to our shores for decades. But it takes more than geography to build and sustain an industry. What's essential is the fifth S: the spirit of aloha.

And nowhere is that spirit of aloha more evident than in the hearts and souls of the employees of the visitor industry. With January right around the corner, a Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association cor-

nerstone event — and one of my favorites — takes place: the annual Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards. Na Po'e Pa'ahana means the "hard-working people" in Hawaiian, and the awards honor the people who make our industry what it is. I often refer to this award as the Oscars of Hospitality.

Now in its 27th year, the awards honor the exceptional individuals working throughout the visitor industry. Employees are nominated in eight categories: bell/valet, engineer/main-tenance, food and beverage, front office, housekeeper, security officer, manager,

and the top award, Most Outstanding Lodging Employee of the Year. This top employee then becomes Hawaii's nominee for the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Stars of Industry national recognition.

Not only are the Na Po'e Pa'ahana nominees cited for exceptional job performance, but also their generous service to the community is reflected in their nominations.

We also salute the allied member of the year, selected from among the many HLTA members that are non-lodging organizations. Last year, we introduced several new

awards: the leader in sustainability, hospitality educator of the year, and Na Po'e Pa'ahana legacy award, and will again select individuals or organizations deserving of these honors. This year, we're adding a new award, chef/restaurateur of the year, to reflect the synergism among our cuisine, the hospitality industry and the visitor experience.

The 2017 awards ceremony will be held Jan. 12 at Sheraton Waikiki Grand Ballroom. The house will be packed, as employees, family and friends join in this celebration of the unsung heroes of our hospitality industry.

It's not often that we think about the people who make our travel experiences so enjoyable. From the folks who greet us when we arrive, to the people who check us in, to all those who toil behind the scenes to make a hotel visit a memorable and enjoyable one, these are the wonderful individuals we thank and honor with the Na Po'e Pa'ahana Awards.

I invite you to learn more about the awards by visiting our website, hawaiilodging.org, and consider joining us in January to see for yourself the remarkable, hard-working people who are the heart

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Memorable Moffatt Moments

and soul of our hospitality industry.

A popular phrase they often would say on radio — “and the hits just keep on coming” — is an appropriate way to describe the reaction and on-going buzz and commentary regarding the recent passing of legendary entertainment guru Uncle Tom Moffatt. It is simply amazing the number of people who grew up in the Islands who can attribute their first concert or favorite group or song to him. His inimitable voice reigned supreme over the air waves for over six decades, and if the one-time original Poi Boy of KPOI radio touted an incoming act he was bringing into town for the first time, like the Rascals, or a song he said was bound to be a smash hit, like *Honolulu City Lights*, you paid attention — and more often than not, you concurred!

In my opinion, his greatest gift to Hawaii was bringing Elvis Presley to the Islands. Because, as we have seen, Elvis fell in love with the 808 and returned again and again for movies, concerts or to just get away.

And there's no denying that it did wonders for Hawaii's tourism industry when we were just emerging on the scene in the '60s and '70s. As a huge Elvis fan, it was my pleasure to work with TV LAND and include Uncle Tom when I was mayor in 2007 to install a bronze statue of the King of Rock on the grounds of Blaisdell Arena. A couple of years later, he chuckled when I teased him, “I can't believe that I beat the great Tom Moffatt in visiting Graceland Mansion.”

Of course, when he finally did make the pilgrimage to Memphis, he was quick to



Uncle Tom having a great time as 2016 'honorary chair' of HLTA Charity Walk with (from left) Dean Nakasone, 2016 Charity Walk chairman, Glenn Vergara, Oahu Chapter chairman, and the author

PHOTO FROM MUFI HANNEMANN

show off the latest Presley shirt upon his return.

Perhaps one of his most endearing qualities was his fervent belief in our homegrown musical talent throughout the decades. He wasn't only intent on luring the national and international superstars of the day to Aloha Stadium, the Blaisdell or Waikiki Shell, but he also believed many of our local artists were deserving of a major concert or hit record. To underscore that conviction, he passionately promoted and opened up opportunities for local artists, including Dick Jensen, C&K, Kalapana, Rap Reiplinger, Beamer Brothers, Aliis, Andy Bumatai, Krush, Loyal Garner, Hui Ohana and scores of others, to take their acts to the next level.

As the guy who followed him each and every Saturday at high noon after his *Rock 'n' Roll Drive In* show in Kalihi on 107.9 Kool Gold, I had the distinct pleasure of talking to him up close about a variety of subjects, from music and entertainment to politics, sports, dining and rail — you name it, we touched on it. That's how I found out that the superstar who was on his bucket list to bring to Hawaii was Sir Paul McCartney.

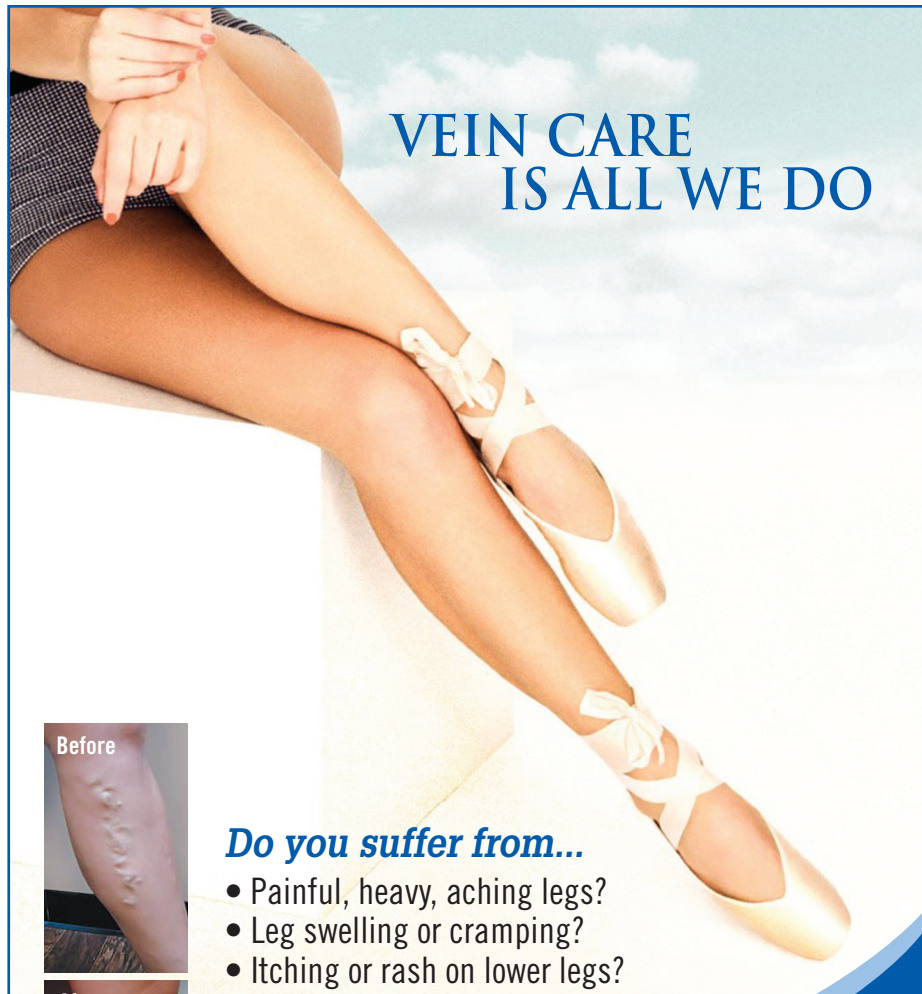
In one of his last acts of community service, he accepted my invitation to be honorary chair for the May 2016 HLTA Charity Walk. At that time, I figured that Moffatt would be the consummate celebrity to lend his support to one of the state's biggest charitable events. The event, staged from Ala Moana Park, enabled Moffatt to help us say mahalo to the thousands of walkers and volunteers who ensured another record-breaking year, and gave the throngs of participants a chance to lavish praise, take selfies and also say mahalo plenty to Uncle Tom for making their lives “choke” with warm and wonderful memories. He was a happy rock star that day.

Too often in life, we are left with expressing our appreciation to our loved ones and highly revered figures when they have left this good earth at their funeral services. I, for one, am very grateful that we at HLTA had an extraordinary opportunity to acknowledge and heap accolades upon Uncle Tom before he became the latest entrant into Rock 'n' Roll Heaven.

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