



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

Hospitality Industry Veteran Joins HLTA

An oft-repeated phrase I have adopted as one of my mantras is that the glass is always half full, not half empty. Such is the case when a key member of your team leaves for another career opportunity. This can be a blow for many organizations, followed by a lot of hand-wringing and uncertainty. That's the half-empty attitude.

Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association's vice president Karen Wataru-Nakaoka recently revealed that she was taking a position with Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau as membership director. Karen's departure is a great loss for the association and our 700-strong membership. I hired her in 2011 to oversee our membership recruitment and retention efforts, and she's done a remarkable job of boosting our numbers and

becoming a top-flight executive who has accomplished so much for the HLTA during her five-year tenure.

When I returned to HLTA, I promoted her to vice president as a reward for her diligent work, including helping found the Women in Lodging & Tourism group that provides networking and mentoring opportunities for women in the industry. She's also done a stellar job in organizing our annual general membership meeting, which is one of the largest events for members on our calendar.

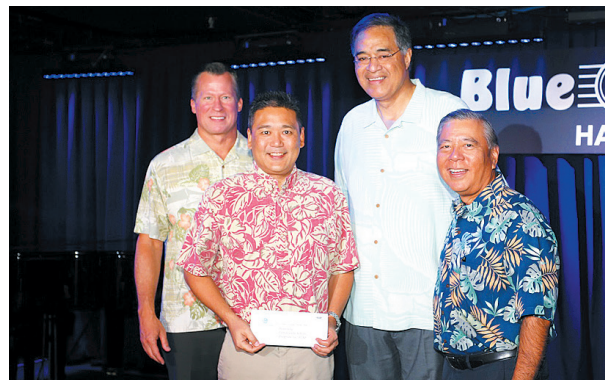
Fortunately, Karen will continue to support the visitor industry through her new job at HVCB, and we wish her well in all her future endeavors.

But I noted at the top that I'm a "glass half full" kind of guy. And that came in the way

of Dean Nakasone, a hospitality industry veteran who was looking for a new opportunity to share his wealth of knowledge and experience with an audience like ours. When I approached Dean, he was receptive and excited to join our HLTA ohana.

I know I speak for the members in saying that we're extremely delighted that Dean is joining our 70-year-old association. With more than 35 years of experience in all phases of hospitality operations, a seasoned professional like Dean will hit the ground running and make immediate contributions to HLTA's advocacy and philanthropic mission.

We expect him to add his personal insights to the challenges facing the visitor industry, and the hotel sector in particular, before legislative



Newly appointed HLTA vice president Dean Nakasone (right), who chaired the 2016 Charity Walk, presents a Charity Walk contribution to Honolulu Community Action Program official Michael Hane (second from left) with HLTA chairman Scott Ingwers (left) and the author **PHOTO COURTESY GREG YAMAMOTO**

bodies and the community. Moreover, Dean is very familiar with our organization because he's served on many of our committees — chairman of the board of directors, chairman of the Oahu Chapter and as chairman of the most recent statewide 2016 Visitor Indus-

try Charity Walk, which raised a record amount of money for local charities.

An alumnus of University of Hawaii's School of Travel Industry Management, Dean has enjoyed a long career in the hotel industry. He most recently was general manag-

er of the 635-room Outrigger Reef Waikiki Beach Resort. Before that, he headed Holiday Inn Waikiki Beachcomber Resort and OHANA Waikiki Beachcomber. Dean also has been with Halekulani, Waikiki Parc Hotel, Hawaii Prince Hotel and Sheraton properties on Hawaii island. Among his numerous community service activities, the proud Iolani alum is on the advisory boards of UH School of Travel Industry Management and Kapiolani Community College's Hospitality and Tourism Education Department.

I'll admit our timing was fortuitous — Karen's departure coincided with Dean's availability. But rather than dwell on the unfortunate or unpredictable, I find it's always best to focus on the positive, to search for opportunity where

Little Caesars DEALS AT \$5 EACH

Available All Day & HOT-N-READY 4-8pm



Bacon Cheddar Loaded Crazy Bites™
Family Size



Caesar Wings®
8-Piece Order



Cinnamon Loaded Crazy Bites™
Family Size



Any Four 20 oz. Soda

EWA BEACH
91-919 Fort Weaver Rd
(808) 689-7587

WAIANAE
86-120 Farrington Hwy B204
(808) 696-2223

WAIHAWA
93 Kamehameha Hwy
(808) 622-4005

WAIPAHU
94-866 Molalo St D-5
(808) 200-2833

PEPSI, PEPSI-COLA and the Pepsi Globe are registered trademarks of PepsiCo. ©2016 LCE, Inc. 58409

\$ 11.99

CLASSIC MEAL DEAL

One large HOT-N-READY® Classic pizza,
one Crazy Combo® (8-piece order)
& one 2-liter Soda

HOT-N-READY® All Day, Every Day!



OFFER EXPIRES 2/28/17
Valid only at participating Little Caesars® locations.
Not good with any other offers. Plus tax where applicable.

\$ 11.99

DEEP!DEEP!™ DISH MEAL DEAL

One large HOT-N-READY DEEP!DEEP! Dish
pizza, one Crazy Combo® (8-piece order)
& one 2-liter Soda

HOT-N-READY® All Day, Every Day!



OFFER EXPIRES 2/28/17
Valid only at participating Little Caesars® locations.
Not good with any other offers. Plus tax where applicable.

Key Transportation Issues

none may be readily apparent, to approach life with a healthy and optimistic attitude, to be a half-full person.

With the opening of the Legislature only a week away, all kinds of issues will consume the time of our elected officials. Undoubtedly, the issue that is bound to dominate most of the discussions and certainly the most controversial by far is Honolulu's rail transit project. By now, everyone is aware that, in order for the project to succeed, it needs a large infusion of cash, and the Federal Transit Administration harbors significant concerns that Honolulu can complete the project to its satisfaction. And that cash, Mayor Caldwell contends, should come from an extension of the GET half-percent surcharge in perpetuity.

Understandably, it is a hard pill for some key legislators to swallow because it was only last year that they granted a

five-year extension to the GET funding that was to sunset on 2017. Furthermore, given the mixed and often contradictory and confusing answers that have emanated from the City and Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transit, legislators are insisting that they have a direct dialogue with FTA in the hope of getting a more accurate and transparent picture of rail's predicament.

And do you blame them? The City Council asked FTA for the same kind of face-to-face meeting when it grew weary of similar weak responses from the administration. The only caveat, I suppose, when such a meeting takes place, is will it be with the right decision-makers, since the newly appointed U.S. Department of Transportation secretary Elaine Chao, a former White House Fellow colleague of mine in the Reagan White House, is not bound at all to honor prior commitments by an outgoing

administration?

That being said, every survey I have ever seen, despite all its mounting problems and challenges, always shows more people in favor of rail than against it. We saw how quickly Caldwell reversed his position from having the train stop at Middle Street to "oops," it should go all the way to Manoa, when he read the poll results and felt the heat from the normally silent pro-rail majority during his re-election bid.

I contend that the silent majority has to insert itself in the debate, and help persuade the state that additional funding is warranted and needed. I long have maintained that one of the best ways to motivate the public is to give them a hopeful and realistic answer to when they will be able to ride the train starting from Waipahu to Aloha Stadium, with buses part of a seamless integrated multi-modal transit system as an option to get people to their next desti-

nation. I'm sorry, but the current standard answer from city officials "not until December 2020" is insufficient.

Yes, critics will say it doesn't go far enough, but in my opinion it will kickstart the momentum to expand and extend a project that has been several decades in the making. Think H-3, which was fraught with delays, objections, lawsuits, cost overruns, but once people started to ride, well, you get the picture.

No question an extension of the GET tax is needed, but the city and HART have to provide better answers and meaningful solutions to a skeptical Legislature and an eager pro-rail audience that is looking for hope and optimism on a project that is long overdue.

On a couple of other transportation-related matters, the time has definitely come for an Airport Authority to materialize. Evidence abounds across the board for the need

of a laser-like focus to improve the conditions of our statewide system of airports. The measure failed to make it out of conference last year, and hopefully a national consultant study initiated by the state's DOT will help assuage concerns to move it forward this session.

Lastly, I have stated repeatedly that it's time to resurrect and revive an interisland ferry system. There are lessons to be learned from the last deba-

cle, and a state-funded study is a step in the right direction. The missing piece is for some courageous champions to emerge at the state legislative or executive level to lead the charge and, in the words of Shakespeare, are "willing to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" for the good of the people ...

mufi@
mufihannemann.com


ABC FURNITURE / 677-2322
 Fine Residential & Commercial Furniture

Diningroom Sets


Bedroom Sets


NO INTEREST FREE FINANCING AVAILABLE FOR 18 MONTHS

IN STOCK - READY FOR DELIVERY

Massage Chairs


Mattress & Foundations


Livingroom Sets


94-137 LEOLEO ST. WAIPAHU, HI 96797
SHOWROOM HOURS: Mon-Fri 9 AM - 6 PM . Sat 10 AM - 5 PM
www.abcfurniturehawaii.com

HOT CLEARANCE SALE!
Cabinets, Countertops & Tile 40% - 50% OFF



First Place HAWAII'S BEST 2016
Awarded by the Star & Quarter

Huge Savings, Incredible & Unbeatable Price!
Over 2000 pre-fab countertops IN-STOCK Porcelain Tile Huge Sale!
Ph: 836-8181
Golden Cabinets & Stone
1299 Kaumuali'i St. • Honolulu, HI 96817
 (Kapalama Area, Cross Waiakamilo Road) Mon-Sat 8am-5pm
 Fax: 836-8166 • www.goldencabinetsstone.com • admin@goldencabinetsstone.com


DENTAL IMPLANTS HAWAII
SM
For missing teeth loose dentures Medicare Participating


Dr. Philip K.B. Tom, DDS, Inc.


Dr. Trang Le DDS


Dr. Russell K. Tasaka, DMD

30 Yrs. Experience Making Dental Implants Affordable
FREE Implant Consult 2nd Opinion • X-rays
Kaimuki Center For Dentistry 737-9032
Kalihi Center For Dentistry 841-7944
dentalimplantshi.com

Riches KAHALA
...in the heart of Kahala Mall

ANNUAL SALE
40% OFF ENTIRE STORE
Sat 1/14 - Mon 1/16
737-3303