



## ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

# Lessons In Perseverance And Patience

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the successful conclusion of a lengthy process that resulted in the preservation of the 1,875-acre Waimea Valley ahupua'a. A celebration was held recently in the valley to commemorate the auspicious occasion.

When we enjoy any of Hawaii's many open spaces and features, be they beaches, parks, playgrounds, historic sites or undeveloped conservation lands, we often overlook how much work it took to protect and preserve them. So it was with Waimea Valley.

The quandary over Waimea Valley arose when various or-

ganizations and individuals began to question the plans of Christian Wolffer of New York, who was the primary property owner at the time. He had become owner of the valley in 1996, when he purchased a company that controlled that land and Sea Life Park. Mr. Wolffer sold Sea Life Park, but kept the valley. However, when his plans to develop a portion of the valley were openly challenged by a number of groups and individuals, they pushed to have the land acquired by the City and County of Honolulu, an action approved by the then-mayor and City Council. The city also set aside

\$5.1 million in escrow as its commitment to the eventual purchase, but short of what the landowner thought the property was worth.

Negotiations over determining the fair market value of Waimea Valley dragged on for several years. In the waning months of the Harris administration, it and Mr. Wolffer reached an agreement that would enable him to develop a portion of Waimea Valley as a means of recouping his investment, and the city would buy the remainder. That formal proposal had to be submitted to the City Council as a matter of legal procedure. However,

opponents of development then lobbied successfully to have the City Council reject the agreement. That meant the city then would have to take the dispute to court for a jury decide the value of the Waimea holdings.

By that time, I had become mayor and was of the belief that determining the fair market value in court could result in a costly, if not unaffordable, settlement for the City and County of Honolulu, beyond the \$5.1 million the Council had appropriated. My goal was to pursue a negotiated settlement instead, a position that was roundly criticized at the time by many advocates seeking a court battle.

Knowing that the city was short of money, other entities stepped forward to offer financial support for the purchase, among them the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, state Department of Land and Natural Resources, National Audubon Society, Hawaii Trust for Public Land, and U.S. Department of Defense.

It is important to note that Josh Stanbro, then-head of Trust for Public Land, worked to secure that last \$2 million from the Defense Department to take us up to \$14 million. In that exercise, he collaborated with my deputy managing director Trudi Saito and first

deputy corporation counsel Donna Woo, who labored diligently to represent the city's interests. We also were able to save Pupukea-Paumalu through the same partnership with the Army and Trust for Public Land, and in the process, staved off another development attempt in this pristine area. What was in it for the Army was that it wanted access to both properties for its maneuvers without disturbing the preservation goals and objectives of these properties.

Despite the growing support of a plethora of credible partners, we still were short of Mr. Wolffer's asking price.



**Mestler**  
table **\$599**  
upholstered side chair **\$189**  
side chair **\$129**

**Salt Lake** 4360 Malaai Street | Honolulu, Hawaii 96818 | 421.3100  
Monday - Friday: 10am to 7pm | Saturday & Sunday: 10am to 6pm

**Ward** 455 Ward Avenue | Honolulu, Hawaii 96814 | 791.3300  
Monday - Friday: 10am to 7pm | Saturday & Sunday: 10am to 6pm

**Pearlridge** 98-107 Kamehameha Hwy | Aiea, Hawaii 96701 | 485.3450  
Monday - Friday: 10am to 9pm | Saturday & Sunday: 10am to 6pm

# LABOR DAY

## SALE

### Buy One, Get One

# 20% OFF

or

# 24 months

special financing\*

On purchases of \$1999 or more with approved credit made by 9/12/16. Equal monthly payments required. Must take delivery by 12/5/16.

\*Subject to credit approval. See store for details. Equal monthly payments required. †Previous purchases excluded. Cannot be combined with any other promotion, discount, The Works or Special Buys. Some pieces and fabric prints may vary by region. Selection may vary by store. SEE STORE FOR DETAILS. Although every precaution is taken, errors in price and/or specification may occur in print. We reserve the right to correct any such errors. Prices valid for a limited time only. Participation times may vary. Picture may not represent item exactly as shown, advertised items may not be on display at all locations. A deposit equal to GE Tax and delivery charges is required for all financed purchases and is not eligible for this credit promotion. Ashley Furniture HomeStores are independently owned and operated. ©2016 Ashley HomeStores, Ltd. Expires 9/12/16.

## Waimea Valley And Kunia Plantation Village

I then reached out to local attorney William McCorriston, who represented the Wolffer interests, and asked for his help to arrange a meeting with Mr. Wolffer. In that exchange, I explained to him the importance of the land to the people of Hawaii, impressed upon him our financial limitations, and eventually reached a negotiated price that was a lot less than what Mr. Wolffer thought the land was worth and was seeking.

In the end, a court-appointed mediator approved a settlement of \$14 million that precluded the case from going to court just weeks before a trial was to commence.

The City and County of Honolulu, therefore, contributed its original \$5.1 million

toward the settlement, a cap I insisted on not exceeding. The City Council approved the deal, and today Hi'ipaka LLC, a nonprofit organization authorized by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, conscientiously and sensitively administers and manages Waimea Valley in a way for locals and visitors to cherish and treasure as a botanical, educational and cultural asset.

The same painstaking creative effort was very evident in 2008 with Kunia Plantation Village, when we struck a deal to preserve 115 homes of agricultural workers and former employees of the Del Monte Plantation.

The city had been working with James Campbell Company and ILWU to find a solution to the housing situation for the

former employees since Del Monte announced the cessation of its Hawaii operations in 2006. Having cut my teeth in the agriculture industry by working for C. Brewer & Co., I had prioritized this effort.

And just when we thought we had run out of options to help these agricultural workers and their families, we came up with a unique idea working closely with Campbell executive Dave Rae. It called for transferring Campbell's 119-acre property to the nonprofit Hawaii Agriculture Research Center for \$1. HARC's obligation would be to maintain, in perpetuity, the plantation homes as affordable rentals for agricultural workers and retirees.

But, for Campbell to be able

to execute the transfer, the city had to provide incentives to make it attractive and appealing for Rae to take back to his board so that we could consummate the deal.

The terms of the proposed agreement meant that the city would count the Kunia homes toward the 1,230 affordable housing units that Campbell had to build in its planned new Makaiwa Hills development in Kapolei. The company also agreed to upgrade the fire system for the plantation village at a cost of \$1 million.

At the time, affordable-housing credits could be transferred only within the development's community plan district, and Kunia obviously was not in the community plan area of Makaiwa Hills. Without delving too

much into the specifics of the city's planning regulations, my Planning and Permitting director David Tanoue had to make a convincing case to the City Council to grant an exception, so that the affordable housing credits for Makaiwa Hills could be applied to Kunia Village. We felt that this was the only option at our disposal to ensure affordable housing for Kunia and enable HARC to have the best opportunity to succeed. To the City Council's credit, it concurred.

This public-private partnership enabled us to preserve a part of our island history and support our vital agriculture industry. Since assuming ownership, HARC has done a fabulous job of identifying the additional funding and putting

together a development team to focus on restoring these homes for Del Monte retirees and agricultural workers to dwell affordably, as well as tastefully re-create the historic Kunia Plantation Village for them to have a livable community.

The Waimea Valley and Kunia agreements took creativity and persistence, and sometimes the willingness to take a position that was not popular, and required a lot of patience and education. But in the end, it was worth it, as you'll have to admit the results, as we presently are witnessing, are in the best interests of the public to appreciate and enjoy for generations to come.

mufi@mufihanneman.com



**HAWAI'I HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: YOUR IDEA CAN EARN YOU A FULL 4-YEAR TUITION SCHOLARSHIP TO HPU!**

**CREATE** an idea that positively impacts your community

**REGISTER** [www.hpu.edu/HPU4HAWAII](http://www.hpu.edu/HPU4HAWAII) and sign-up for a workshop

**GET READY** to transform your concept and possibly your life!



**HAWAI'I PACIFIC  
UNIVERSITY**

**MORE INFO:** [www.hpu.edu/hpu4hawaii](http://www.hpu.edu/hpu4hawaii)