



Back to the Future ***with Allan Lum***

By Rick Coyne

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU MIX HAWAIIAN STYLE GOLF, A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR, HUMILITY AND A LAID BACK DISPOSITION? A GM IN AN ALOHA SHIRT AND KHAKI PANTS, NAMELY, ALLAN S. U. LUM, CCM, CCE, AND THE FIRST ASIAN-AMERICAN PRESIDENT OF CMAA.

In as many years as I have been involved with CMAA and having met Allan several times, I never really knew what an incredibly bright, unassuming and brilliantly funny man he is. Anyone who attended the closing session of the San Diego Conference knows what I'm talking about.

Allan started life in Honolulu, the grandson of Chinese immigrants who came to Hawaii in the early 1900s. Born to Hung Chiu and Lillian Awai Lum in 1946, Allan had some humble beginnings, but because education was so important to both his grandparents and parents it became the foundation of Allan's life.

With a mother who taught school and attended the University of Hawaii and a father who was an accountant and attended University of Washington, it was almost natural that they

insisted on the best of education for Allan and his three sisters. In fact, Allan attended Punahou School, the very same high school that is President Obama's alma mater. Lum became the tennis team captain in his Senior year.

In 1964, with high school graduation behind him, most of his classmates set off for mainland colleges and universities. As they say...even with the greatest of intentions Allan stayed closer to home at the University of Hawaii, thinking he would head to the mainland after his first two years in college.

As fate would have it, Allan did find himself on the mainland two years later but not the way he'd planned the move. It seems higher learning and Allan would need a few more years to synch up and with a choice between the Army (Vietnam) and Air Force, Allan in 1966, was on his way to the wild blue yonder, Biloxi, Mississippi.

Returning to Honolulu Allan re-enrolled in University of Hawaii and met Dexter Choy, an advisor at the school who allowed Allan to begin taking classes in hotel and restaurant management, a move that would shape Allan's future and one that he would always be grateful to now, Dr. Dexter Choy Ph.D. for having allowed.

In 1972, he graduated from the College of Business with a BBA and a major in Hotel Restaurant Management.

This was to become one of Allan's most fortuitous years. As best man for Paul Leong, Jr, Allan's best friend for the past 50 years, he met Betsy, the woman of his dreams, his life partner and the mother of their two children Erica and Mark. Visiting before the wedding and attending Iowa State University at the time, the relationship started off long distance but Allan knew Betsy was

SEE COVER STORY - PAGE 22

PHOTOS ON PAGE 21 TOP TO BOTTOM
PUA SONNENBERG, MECHANIC; **ALLAN LUM RANDALL WONG**, CART BARN SUPERVISOR; **ALLAN LUM KEITH TAMAGAWA**, SOUS CHEF; **ALLAN LUM DEPARTMENT HEAD STAFF MEETING**

PHOTO ON PAGE 22
ROY KOBAYASHI, BAG ROOM ATTENDANT; **ALLAN LUM**

PHOTO ON PAGE 23
JUDIE LARSSON, GOLF PRO SHOP BUYER; **ALLAN LUM**

PHOTO ON PAGE 25 & 26
ALLAN LUM





[COVER STORY] - 21

the one when one Christmas as she arrived to the airport in Honolulu, she brought him a new set of MacGregor Tourney clubs. They were married on June 22nd, 1974.

After graduation, Allan had a variety of jobs including playing golf professional on his honeymoon in Maui. After several holes of observation and commentary on Betsy's lack of concentration and skill, she quietly removed her golf shoes and returned to their room. Allan of course finished the round, but the experience resulted in a change of careers as Betsy has refused to play golf with him ever since!

Actually, one of Allan's first real jobs was managing the then popular and well known Don the Beachcomber restaurant and the disco next door, Foxy Lady Too. For another two years he managed the Paradise Park Restaurant, a local visitor theme park on the island. It was at this latter position that Allan had a career turning point. He was fired.

After months of soul searching and being a handyman for Betsy, who was working and managing to keep the household afloat, Allan realized that he needed a change of direction.

Playing tennis at Waialae Country Club one day with Paul Leong, on the next court was then house committee chairman Joe Dacey, whom Allan had known as the vice president

and general manager of A. H. Hansen Sales, a meat vendor to Paradise Park.

One thing led to another and Joe asked Allan if he would be interested in the clubhouse manager's position. Allan responded affirmatively, the committee interviewed him and he was hired. Mike Noguchi, CCM, the then club manager had not been informed and could easily have made life difficult for Allan, but he didn't.

Instead he mentored and worked hard with Allan so that when Mike retired in 1981, after 39 years at the helm, Allan was ready to take the ball and run. And that was another good year.

Along the journey, two lovely children were born, Erica and Mark. The oldest, Erica went to the same high school as Dad, then to Fordham University on a volleyball scholarship. She currently lives in Italy with her fiancé (Philip Martin), who is playing professional basketball there. They will be married in August of 2010 in Hawaii.

Mark, who is 24, has trained to be a chef, attended Johnson and Wales University (Denver) where he received his Associate Degree in Culinary and a Bachelor's Degree in Foodservice Management, but according to Dad has received a Ph.D. in surfing and snowboarding.

He and friend Seth Cohn have just opened a restaurant in the resort town of Camden, Maine, about as far away as you can get from Hawaii and still be in the continental U.S.

It's been an interesting and exciting career and one that has new stories yet to come. His accomplishments are exceptional including being a member of CMAA since 1980, obtain-

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ing his Certified Club Manager designation in 1984, his Honor Society in 1990 and his Certified Chief Executive distinction in 2008.

He has been recertified 7 times; has been through the chairs twice at the Paradise of the Pacific Chapter and has served on almost every national committee. Allan served as national conference co-chair in Hawaii in 1996 and has attended 29 national conferences.

Allan has been at Waialae Country Club since 1978 and it's general manager since 1981. He is a member of the 25-Year Club. Together with his predecessor, Mike Noguchi, CCM, the first Asian-American in CMAA, they are the only two 25-Year Club members, back to back at the same club.

Waialae Country Club has hosted 4 CMAA conference club tours and 45 consecutive PGA TOUR events, currently known as the Sony Open in Hawaii.

Here are some of Allan's thoughts about his life, his ambitions and his passions.

RICK COYNE – At conference you referenced turning points and how we deal with them. I know that you had a heart attack in 2004. How big a turning point was that for you?

ALLAN LUM – The heart attack itself was a wake up but the series of events that occurred after the attack and the fact that I am here today tells me that there is something more that I am put here to achieve and that a higher power intervened in saving my life.

I was downtown by myself negotiating over an antique teapot when I felt an enormous pain and pressure in my chest. I knew it was a heart attack and immediately took two aspirins, which I highly recommend that everyone carry them with them for just such an emergency.

Driving to the hospital amazingly there were no red lights and I parked at the emergency room entrance. Ninety seconds later my heart stopped. Amazingly, even though it took eight shocks from the defibrillator to revive me, a cardiac specialist just happened to be in the emergency room and was able to immediately insert a stent, which ultimately saved my life.

So yes, it was a physical turning point that started with the heart attack but made me realize that the alignment of things that had to have gone perfect in order for me to have survived

was a really major intellectual and emotional turning point.

RC – You always seem to maintain your sense of humor. How important is that in managing people and creating experiences for your members?

AL – Humor has been and always will be a part of my life. Staff meetings, committee meetings and even board meetings, there is nothing like a little humor to break the ice, alleviate a tense situation or provide an example or analogy. The trick is to know how and when.

While in the service, I was assigned to work Christmas Eve and Christmas Day night and there was a blizzard going on. We were assigned to pull a name from a hat, keep it secret and purchase a simple gift for that person. I and a fellow airman (Bob Russell) were put in charge.

Unknown to the rest of the shift, he and I had only put our names in the hat. No one knew until that night. Bob and I were given the heave ho into a snow bank. In that bleak period, this humorous gag left everyone with a grin.

One of my most memorable CMAA moments was at the tail end of BMI V in Ithaca, New York. A group of us got together and with a little bubbly persuasion, recanted our most

SEE COVER STORY - PAGE 24





[COVER STORY] - 23

humorous stories about members and employees. Listening to the normally stoic John Jordan, MCM weave his tale, imitating the various characters in a distinctly Georgia drawl was priceless, as was his story.

I would like to someday pursue my MCM with the theme of the value of humor in clubs. Imagine what that would be like.

RC – It could easily be said that our industry is at some kind of turning point. What advice do you have for clubs, general managers and boards as they face these moments of truth?

AL – Stay true to your beliefs and club customs. Continue to do what you have been doing to get you where you are, but try putting a new twist to it.

Go to other clubs and the Idea Fair borrowing (a nice word for stealing because I never have any intention of giving it back) their ideas and claiming they are my own. At our annual exposition, the same can be said when we are asked what we would like to see. I don't know...but I'll know when I see it! Get out and experience new things everyday. You can really show your worth by answering the challenge of these times. What may have been discarded as a ridiculous idea years ago, may now be acceptable.

Clubs need to let management manage and GMs need to let the professionals be professionals. Let the GM concept work. It won't happen just because you are saying it works. It takes effort to make it work, but it also takes *trust* and trust is a 2-way street. I never envisioned also becoming an officer of the club as assistant secretary and assistant treasurer. That didn't happen overnight. The employees at Waialae have been very fortunate in having a board that supports them...100 percent.

RC – In your speech at conference you said its time to get Back To The Future. What does that mean in terms of where clubs are today and where they might be tomorrow?

AL – In saying that, I was referring to the challenge for our association and managers. It was primarily in reference to where we have been with our exposition and the GIS and where we will be going in the future.

Where we are going is where we have been before GIS, thus the phrase. We will improve upon where we have been because we've learned from our experience and we'll progress forward to make things better for our association and better for the purveyor/partners that support us.

This however cannot happen without all of our cooperation. We need to create a stronger partnership with our purveyors so that they participate in the trade show. We can support them by purchasing from those that support us.

SEE COVER STORY - PAGE 26

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[COVER STORY] - 24

RC - Are there any mentors who you feel helped you attain your success?

AL - Without question, "Mike" Hisashi Noguchi, CCM, my first boss was of tremendous support and guidance. To Mike, I owe him everything that I ever dreamed of attaining in the club business.

Former CMAA Presidents, Dick Maynes, CCM, Bob Hedges, CCM and the late Ed McKellar were also instrumental in my "development." Last but not least, my late father-in-law, Don A. Rossi (aka Grandpa Ding), ex-executive director of the National Golf foundation for taking me by the hand and introducing me in my rookie years to some of the finest club managers that one would ever want to meet.

RC - One final question Allan. How important is continuing education in today's club environment?

AL - It has and always will be the foundation of our association. Professionalism, education,

leadership are the three main themes in our logo, but in my opinion, education takes the lead.

I can say without any reservation whatsoever that I wouldn't be where I am had I not attended one of the finest college prep schools in the country and or not been afforded the multitude of education opportunities presented by CMAA in my 30 plus years of membership.

I'm the product of a CMAA education. Anyone that thinks once they graduate from college that their education days are over is sorely mistaken. I take great pride and satisfaction in seeing how far our educational offerings have improved since my first conference.

'In the old days', it was primarily leadership and motivation. It's now like the study of medicine, very specialized. CMAA has assembled the premier educational staff with Jason Koenigsfeld, Ph.D., David McCabe, Joe Patrick and Joe Perdue, CCM, CHE who are constantly evaluating the worth of our educational offerings, and updating as necessary to keep us on the "cutting edge." The BMI series and webinar programs are fine examples.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As always, it was a delight in putting this story together for CMAA's new president. Allan's irrepressible humor and positive attitude are infectious and his words are as wise as any I have ever heard. His humility and views on education, as well as his reference to supporting those that support us, are enlightening. In short, we are in good hands.

So here's to 2010, to Allan Lum, to CMAA and to getting 'Back to the Future.' **BR**

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