

WORDS ON A POSTER

By John F. Hall

I was watching the television show Hawaii Five-O. It was my son, John's birthday and I remembered a container that had a poster of the cast from the original series that aired



from 1968 to 1980. The show starred Jack Lord as Detective Steve McGarrett. He was the leader of Hawaii Five-O, a special division of the state police. It was tasked with bringing down organized crime on the islands. Hawaii is the only state made up entirely of islands. James MacArthur played the part of Detective Danny Williams. One line from that show would have McGarrett tell MacArthur to "Book' um Danno," when he wanted Detective Williams to lock up a criminal.

They made a revised Hawaii Five-O television show that aired from 2010 to 2020. I was watching a rerun from that series. There is a saying that you cannot fool all the people all the time. I guess the revised show was trying to fool all the people, again. As much as I enjoyed watching the original Hawaii Five-O, I knew that the show is 100 percent fiction. There is no state police in Hawaii. Each of the four counties in the state is responsible for its own police force. After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Governor Joseph B. Poindexter signed a proclamation by which he turned the territory of Hawaii over to the military. The territory was immediately declared to be under martial law. The Honolulu Police Department became a deputized military force. It returned to normal police status after the war ended. Hawaii became our 50th state on August 21, 1959.

Three times I traveled to Hawaii. The first time was in 1964. I was a 19 year old Army Private. I was part of a security team on a Merchant Marine cargo ship. We were guarding a classified weapons shipment to South Korea. The Captain of the ship anchored off Pearl Harbor and gave us



three days of shore leave. I didn't have enough money to pay for a hotel room, so I slept on the sands of Waikiki Beach. This part of the beach belongs to the Army. The Military Police patrols the beach and found me sleeping. They woke me up. I showed them my travel orders and military identification card. I told them that I could not afford a hotel room and the

Captain of the ship would pick me and the rest of the team up in two days. They told me to be careful. There was a nice shower and restroom building on that beach. It had hot water. I remember going to a church that was located across the road from the beach. I believe someone said "Aloha" as I entered the church.

The second time that I traveled to Hawaii was in 1985. I was a 40 year old Captain in the



Army Reserve and on a family vacation. This was a few years before I retired from the Kentucky State Police. I drove a rental car to the Honolulu Police Department to register my off duty 9MM semiautomatic handgun. I had more firepower with my 9MM than I had with

my 357 Magnum service revolver. I asked the officer on duty a question. I asked about the qualification to be on their police force. He said the main requirement is that you have to be a resident of Honolulu for three years prior to making an application to join their department. They did this to give priority to the local Hawaiians.

The third time that I traveled to Hawaii was in 2004. I was a 59 year old Army Lieutenant Colonel. I was on a two-week mission to conduct a security inspection of the Tripler



Army Medical Center in Honolulu. I was looking at all aspects of security coming in and out of that facility. The facility is the only federal tertiary care hospital in the Pacific Basin. And the only United Nations Peace Operations Institute in the United States. The Medical Center supports 264,000 local active duty and retired personnel, their families, and veteran beneficiaries. On a typical day, the hospital serves an average of 1,738 meals, has 2,248 clinic visits and 110 emergency room visits. Tripler has 1,567,994 square feet. It has 1,451 military and 2,020 civilians working at the hospital. I went through the

entire facility. Along the way, I picked up an eye infection opening up so many doors. So I became a walk-in patient. After I completed my inspection, I provided my report to the hospital commander.

The first week of the inspection, there was no housing for me or Paula at the Tripler Army Medical Center housing area. We had to stay at the Army Hale Koa Hotel on Waikiki Beach. This hotel was built near where I slept on the beach in 1964. It was bumper to bumper traffic to travel from the hotel to Tripler. I would call Paula before I left the hospital to see if she needed anything.



The Provost Marshall at Tripler, Donald E. Devaney, invited me to join him for a Change of Command Ceremony at the 25th Military Police Battalion at Schofield Barracks. We

were joined by Special Agent Sam S.C. Mum (FBI). He told me that the hotel where I was staying was the number one target for a terrorist attack. I think I told him that he was a real ray of sunshine. Paula and I went to visit the Troop Commander of Tripler Army Medical Center, Colonel Paul W. Wingo. We are old friends. We were in the same Command and General Staff College before it was moved from the University of Southern Mississippi. Paul gave me a dried starfish as a gift.

Paula and I moved into the housing area at Tripler the second week of my assignment. We drove to the other side of the island to visit one of her friends that works at Tripler. It was a relief not to have to fight the traffic going to and from the hospital. Paula's friend told me that she remembers, when she was a little girl, seeing the Japanese planes flying

at near tree top level to attack Pearl Harbor. She said she could see their faces. Provost



Marshall Devaney held a small gathering after I completed the mission. I was the IRR Provost Marshall. I was using his office and I mentioned that I liked the poster of the original Hawaii Five-O cast. Donald presented me with a copy of the poster that he had in his office, as a going away gift. I estimate the poster cost \$5.00. Rather than fold it up for the flight back to the mainland, I decided to purchase a postal container for \$2.49 and roll up the poster and put it in the container. It cost me \$1.75 to mail the poster from Honolulu, Hawaii to Cadiz, Kentucky. For 15 years, that container was gathering dust behind a computer desk on the second floor of my old Kentucky Home. I remember there were hand written words on the bottom of that poster. So I dusted off the container and opened it up. These are the words on that poster: “LTC John

Hall - Mahalo Mui Loa for all you have done for the Army in Hawaii.” It was signed Steve McGarrett II. Now that signature is as factitious as the Hawaii Five-O television series.

I suspect that Donald Devaney wrote those words. He also recommended that I become a member of the Retired Military Police Officers Association. I followed his advice. I



decided to give the poster to my son, John. I texted him and wrote: “I was watching Hawaii Five-O. The series that ran from 2010 to 2020. I like the original series that ran from 1968 to 1980. I was doing security work for the Army in 2004 in Hawaii. They gave me a 30th Anniversary poster from that series. I mailed it to myself from Hawaii. I meant to give it to you back then. I decided to give it to you tonight. Next time you are over, remind me to give it to

you.” He texted back, “Cool...Thanks.”

The three Polynesian words on the poster were new to me in 2004. I had to look up their meaning when I began to write this story. The first word, “Mahalo,” means thank you. The second word, “Nui,” means very. The third word, “Loa,” means much. The last word on the poster is “Aloha.” That word has many meanings. In Hawaii they say “Aloha,” as a greeting and also to say goodbye. The real meaning of “Aloha” is that of love, peace, and compassion. It is about how to live a life when the heart is so full it is overflowing with the ability to influence others around you with your spirit. My stories are a mixture of history, personal experiences, and observations. Some of my stories entertain; some of my stories inspire, and some of my stories motivate. I’ll end this story with the compassion part of the word “Aloha.” Keith Getty, Stuart Townsend, and Kristyn, wrote

“Compassion Hymn.” Hymn writers are some of the best tellers of - Christ’s compassion on earth. Most of their lyrics, in the next paragraph, tell part of that compassion story.

“There is an everlasting kindness You lavished on us when the radiance of heaven came to rescue the lost. You called the sheep without a Shepard to leave their distress. For Your streams are forgiveness and the shade of Your rest. And with compassion for the hurting You reached out Your hand. As the lame ran to reach You and the dead breathed again. You saw behind the eyes of sorrow and shared in our tears. Heard the sigh of the weary, let the children draw near. Stood beneath the cross of Calvary and gazed on Your face. At the thorns of oppression and wounds of disgrace. For surely You have borne our suffering and carried our grief. As You pardoned the scoffer and showed grace to the thief. How beautiful the feet that carry this gospel of peace. To the fields of injustice and the valleys of need. To be a voice of hope and healing, to answer the cries of the hungry and helpless with the mercy of Christ. What boundless love, what fathomless grace You have shown us, oh God of compassion. Each day we live an offering of praise. As we show the world your Compassion.”

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
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