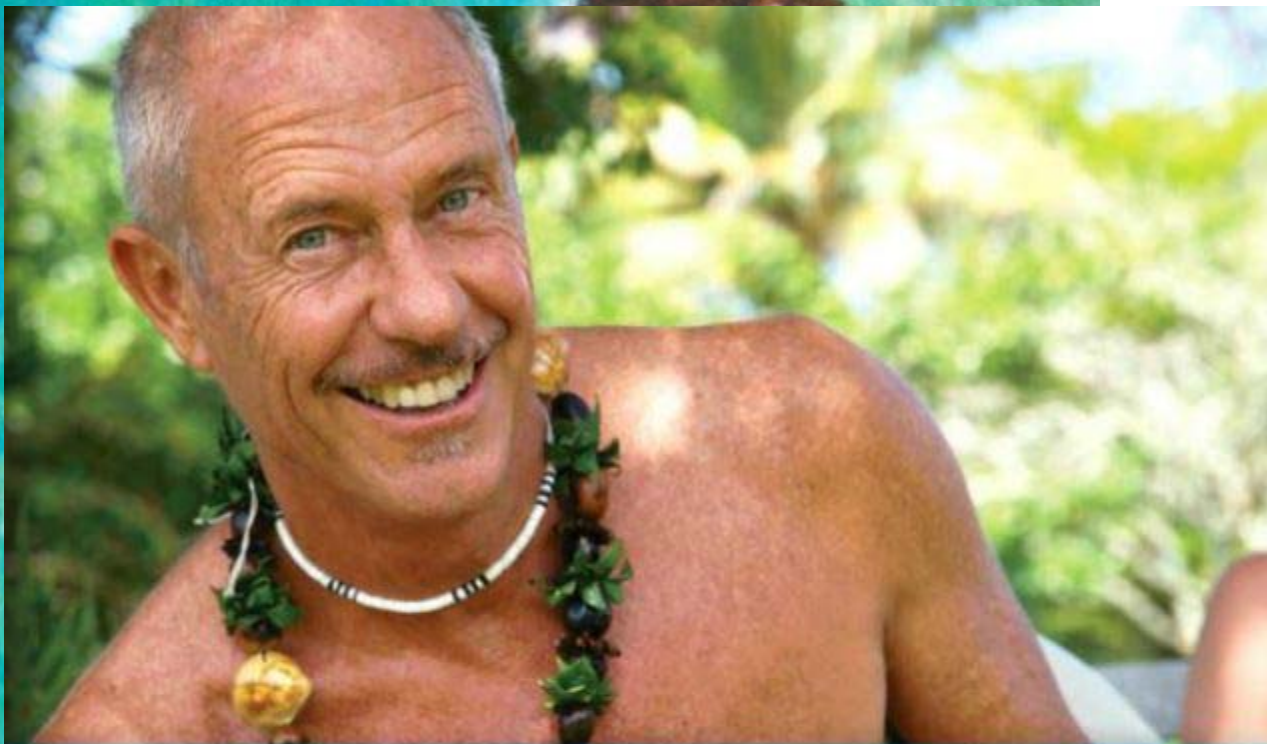


KE OLA *"The Life"*

Celebrating the arts, culture, and sustainability of the Hawaiian Islands

Hawai'i Island Edition

May-June 2013 • Mei-June 2013



From Provence to Puna

Kalani Oceanside Retreat says "Mahalo" to Founder | By Le'a Gleason

Standing in the middle of the expansive lawn at Kalani Oceanside Retreat, Richard Koob waves down two passing guests. "Come join us for volleyball," he grins, charisma and charm infectious. He hands each a puakenikeni flower to place behind their ears.

A generous spirit and deep compassion marks this Minnesotan-turned-local who first stepped on to these 120 acres of untamed jungle 38 years ago, along with dance partner and companion Earnest Morgan.

Richard recalls meeting Earnest and the love story that followed.

"We met exactly a year after Stonewall—in June, 1970, when I was passing out flyers on Christopher Street, in Greenwich Village to get all the guys and gals to raise a ruckus in the first anniversary march from Sheridan Square to Central Park. New York, gay life across America, the streets, the bars, nothing would hereafter ever be the same. Nor would we. After less than a few months of dating I left my Brooklyn collective of eight men, and the underground press where I'd printed the rally flyers," he remembers.

Richard would soon cross the Brooklyn bridge to live with Earnest in a tiny apartment in Little Italy where the chirp of crickets in a terrarium, sips of jasmine tea, sweet songs on the tape player, and the sensuous surf of their waterbed were the best possible re-creation of Earnest's Hawai'i homeland.

"Earnest taught me about Hawaiian 'ha,' or breath, as in the word mahalo. We expressed mahalo for the miracle of each other's love, for all of life, for the dance of each moment. Our love began to manifest an old car from my California brother,

trips to the country solitude of northeast Pennsylvania, a garden on the roof. Along came personal growth opportunities, and Earnie, too, unfolded new freedoms as he invited me to join him in a grand leap to Paris," says Richard.

In a memoir, Richard would later write about their time in France, "We cherish most the evening walks hand-in-hand along a country lane tucked between fields of fragrant lavender. It is so easy to breathe the joie de vivre and forget that there might be any destination or goal beyond just being itself. Earnest and I have been loving friends for over two years now."



Richard and Earnest



**L-R: Ernest Morgan, Richard Koob,
and renowned Hawai'i artist Juliette May Frazer
1982 grand opening of Kalani**

While living in Provence, the two came upon an abandoned monastery up for sale, which they wanted to turn into a healing retreat.

"We'd already had a couple bouts in Paris with bureaucracy, so I agreed when Earnest said, 'let's go to Hawai'i and do it.' Exactly what, where, when and how, we would 'do it,' we weren't sure. But we'd stumbled upon the idea to create a retreat center. As much as in times past, the anxious world was again screaming its need for places of refuge. We wanted to touch and heal people with something we had found deep within ourselves and our experience," says Richard.

The pair were drawn to the beautiful and isolated Puna coast, a large conservation area they saw as the ideal environment for a center that encouraged visitors to embrace the vitality of nature.

"Hawai'i Island called, beckoning us to Hilo. The land, the 'āina—literally that which nurtures us—had welcomed us. We were drawn to the rugged coastal beauty, the rare black sand beaches and clear deep blue sea, the botanic lushness, and the rich and alive cultural heritage. We never forgot our vision, birthed in Provence, to create an arts-focused retreat. We had searched many places for a location to realize our dream and Puna called to us on a profound level," he says.

In 1975 the two purchased the original 19 acres in partnership with Richard's parents.

"Earnest, beloved Maui friend Bill Biglow, and I teamed together to machete our way through thick jungle and build the property's first cabin with three central 'ōh'a pole supports symbolizing our loving friendship. Although I now live here on the Kalani campus in a newer home, just visiting that cottage still gives me 'chicken skin,'" Richard recalls.

The property is also home to archaeological sites, including a heiau—a temple believed to be dedicated to Lono, the god of agricultural abundance—and a hālau, the Kama'ili School, which was in active use until the early 1900s. Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole was the first of many kumu hula who shared Hawai'i's cultural heritage with Richard and Earnest and encouraged them to recognize the presence of the native sites as indicators that the pair were being welcomed as stewards of the property.

"Before taking on this all-engrossing life project I needed a deep and spiritual indicator. Clearly we were made to feel at home by the mana of the area and the aloha of its residents. We wanted to honor the traditional use of the land, and so we focused on providing opportunities for education, and for personal and spiritual growth," says Richard.

Tragically, on May 9, 1992, Earnest Morgan died of complications with AIDS.

"My sweet man punahele, squeezed my hand in a farewell to be forever free. Kalani's cultural expression, its soul, is rooted in his dance. After Earnest's ashes were sprinkled at Kalani, long-term loving friends continued to hold and help me with Kalani's continuing rebirth. The arts keep blossoming, the facilities and annual income keep growing, and the healing keeps happening. Earnest inspired an enduring creativity and love in all his relations," remembers Richard.



**Intercultural Dance Fest at the 1982 Kalani Grand Opening
reported as "The best party ever in Puna"**

Today, Kalani has grown to become the largest retreat center in Hawai'i, built over the past 38 years by volunteers from all over the globe, eager to help create space for creativity and healing while enjoying the atmosphere, accommodations, activities, and delicious healthy meals.

Kalani also has the distinction of being the largest nonprofit organization providing services to the district of Puna, the poorest district in Hawai'i, with all proceeds from guest stays going into Kalani's community programming and services.

"Our goal has never been profit or gain. Our goal was to create a space where people's lives could transform, and that has extended into the surrounding district with our community programs," says Richard.

At Kalani, the sense of community is profound. According to Richard, the formula is simple: creating an environment of mutual respect, support, and appreciation for one another, in the spirit of aloha.

"It is the sense of being joined in a community that really supports people to rise to their personal best. One of the most exciting things for me is to watch people's lives transform in this environment. It's about the person. My true hope is that as many people as possible can experience growth, transformation, and healthier models of living here," Richard says.

People in the community find it hard to believe that Richard—a bundle of energy to say the least—will actually retire, but he makes it clear that it's true.

"I like to say that I'm not stepping down, I'm stepping up, hopefully ever closer to what Kalani is all about: heaven!" he says.



Kalani—lush and peaceful—a bit of heaven on earth

Richard will continue to draft Kalani's second 30-year-plan and follow it through County and State permit processes, and then he looks forward to writing his second book. Taking Richard's place at the helm is the talented and energetic Lester John Bates III, hand-picked from more than 75 applicants.

"Can you imagine filling the shoes of Richard Koob?" quips L.J. "I'm honored to do so, and have made a commitment to lead Kalani responsibly, building upon Kalani's history of transformation and community development."

Richard is thrilled with how L.J. has taken the reigns of Kalani thus far. "I feel so blessed to have talented people to whom I can pass the flame. L.J. is poised to steward Kalani with passion and precision. I can move into this next phase of my life knowing that Kalani is in very good hands," he says.

Soon, the community will join together to recognize the man who has contributed so much to helping it grow. "Our community will be out in full force to celebrate Richard. He is the living example of 'thinking globally and acting locally.' We are so glad to be able to honor his work," says L.J.

In honor of Richard's 38 years of service to Kalani and to the district of Puna, celebrations will include a special feast and show July 6. The annual Ānuenue Freedom Festival will be held on July 7, featuring a celebratory Ecstatic Dance, as well as a 70s themed pool party with surprises to make it a bash everyone will remember.

As for Richard, he'll keep on inviting everyone to swim and play volleyball with a handful of puakenikeni and his warm, inviting smile, for many years to come. ♦

For events at Kalani: Kalani.com
 Contact Richard Koob: 808.965.0468 X104

Contact writer Le'a Gleason: lgfreelancehawaii@gmail.com



"Spiral—Daina" by artist Richard Koob

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Kiana Lee
The Uluwale Lei



For May Lei Day the cover depicts the loveliest of garlands, the embrace of a child. Below, and added pic of LJ, Kalani's Director, and Tiki, General Manager, with Richard dancing the hula hoop of life, in front of the Kalani Pu'uwai sculpture, signifying opening one's heart to the heavens while keeping all limbs firmly grounded.



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CONCERTS & WORKSHOPS THROUGHOUT PUNA
MAY 5-11
punamusicfestival.com

PUNA MUSIC FEST

- MAY 5TH KULUPALA NIGHT MARKET CELEBRATION 6-10
- MAY 6TH PUNAKI OPEN CONCERT 12-5
- MAY 8TH KULUPALA NIGHT MARKET CELEBRATION 6-10
- MAY 10TH KANIKAPELA IN PANAHA 6-10
- MAY 11TH MEDICINE FOR THE PEOPLE AT EMMA 7:30-9:30

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