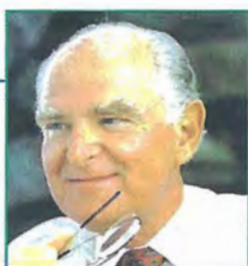


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IRISH AMERICA'S ANNUAL

# BUSINESS

# 100



“Doing business isn’t first and foremost an economic activity. Yes, it is about economics and, yes, the consequences are measured in economic terms, but commodities do not buy and make themselves. People buy them, sell them, make them. A product is part of a relationship”

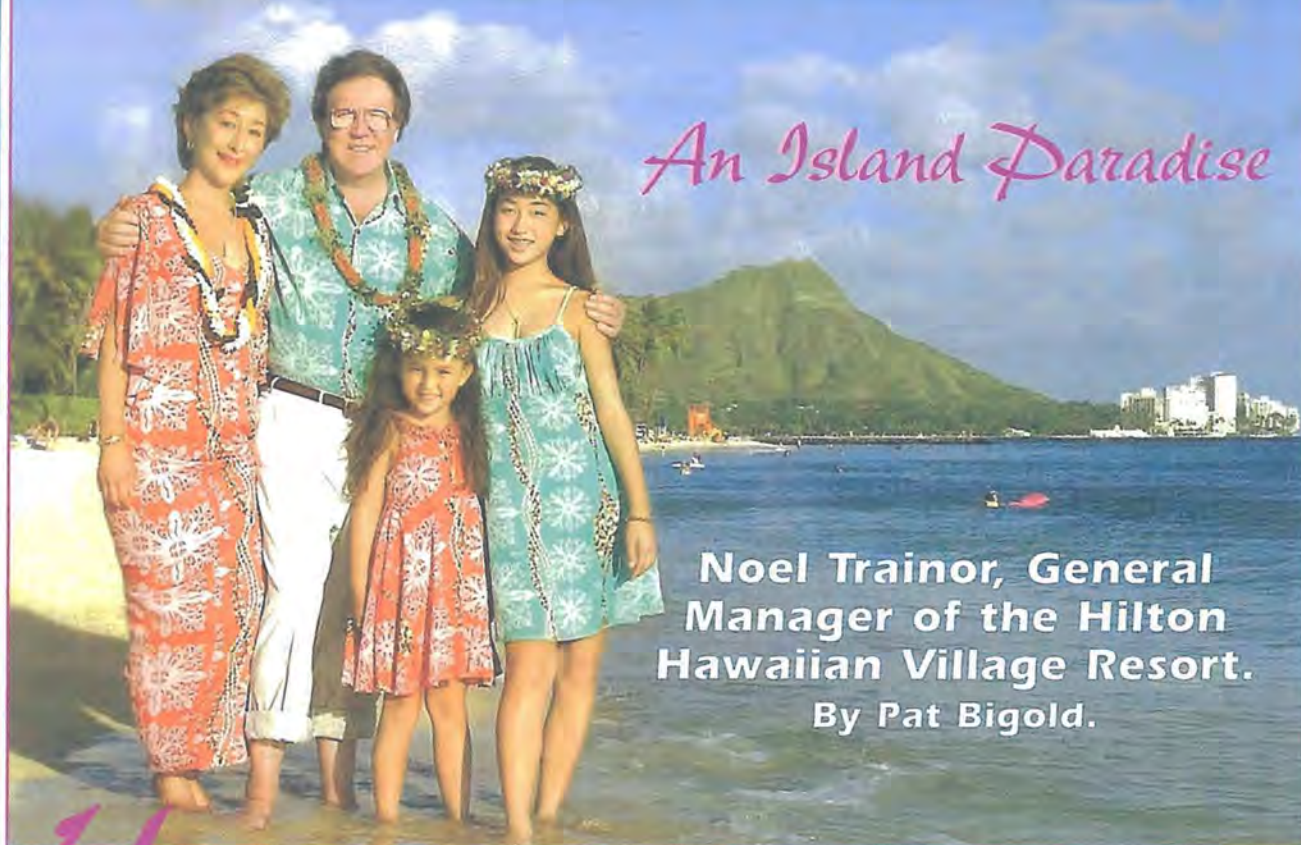
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## An Island Paradise

**Noel Trainor, General Manager of the Hilton Hawaiian Village Resort.**

**By Pat Bigold.**

Noel Trainor with his wife, Lisa and their daughters Leimomi Noel, 12, and Leimana Shannon, 5.

**H**onolulu, Hawaii: As Noel Trainor strolls the lolling landscape of his subtropical dominion, it's not hard to picture him in a cassock and biretta, making the rounds of an old Irish country parish.

Every parishioner receives not only a greeting but a warm, two-handed clasp of the hand and an inquiry about some member of the family.

"How's your husband doing?"

"How's your cold?"

"How are the children? What was the name of your youngest?"

His smile is constant and around every corner is someone he knows, or will attempt to know.

You can sense that these are his people and he is fulfilling his mission in life.

But Trainor is no cleric. He's the general manager of the Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort and Spa, Hawaii's largest hotel property.

The almost religious devotion he has for his enormous job and the exquisite joy he seems to derive from it make you think one of the seminaries in Ireland that recruited him as a teenager had actually succeeded in putting a collar on him.

The 22-acre property is the largest non-gaming resort in the U.S. and the second largest non-gaming resort in the world.

Besides its 3,432 guest rooms in six

towers, the hotel has 18 restaurants and eateries, eight lounges, five swimming pools, 150,000 square feet of meeting and convention space, an elaborate spa, a museum, a doctor's office, a variety of Christian church services, a business center, a wedding chapel, a tourist submarine, and a zoo integrated into the environment featuring penguins, flamingos and

*"The Irish are storytellers," said the 57-year-old son of working class Belfast parents. "They have that ability to engage people. They have that hospitality and courtesy where they welcome everybody. It's in the blood."*

Egyptian ibis, among other exotic species.

The property Trainor oversees, the largest contiguous privately owned land in Waikiki Beach's one square mile, encompasses everything a visitor to the island of Oahu could want.

In fact, Trainor points out, once you settle in at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, you really don't have to go off the property to enjoy your vacation.

"I remember Henry Kaiser (the hotel's founder) had a vision of what this place would be," he said. "He envisioned it being a village and that's why it was called the Hawaiian Village."

It's a social environment in which Trainor can express his Irish nature to the fullest.

"The Irish are storytellers," said the 57-year-old son of working class Belfast par-

ents. "They have that ability to engage people. They have that hospitality and courtesy where they welcome everybody," he said as he quick-stepped over a walkway that borders a carp pond. "It's in the blood."

Trainor found his vocation 43 years ago when he began his hotel career as a busboy at Belfast's International Hotel.

*"The Irish are storytellers," said the 57-year-old son of working class Belfast parents. "They have that ability to engage people. They have that hospitality and courtesy where they welcome everybody. It's in the blood."*

En route to Oahu, he ascended to catering and managing stints in the Jersey Channel Isles (off the coast of France), Switzerland, Bermuda, and the Big Island of Hawaii.

But at the Hilton Hawaiian Village he found his biggest challenge and the perfect niche for his nurturing personality – a little world that requires constant attention.

"I like all the benefits of this. It's a small community that runs 24 hours. All of its constituents need to be serviced."

Cindy Chan-Ikehara, helping to prepare a Wells Fargo outdoor function near the Hilton Lagoon, brightens when she sees Trainor approach. She said he goes out of his way to compliment the work his employees do and takes an interest in their personal lives. "He makes us feel really good and special and that makes us want

to work really hard for him because we love him," said Chan-Ikehara. "We're a big ohana (family) here."

Ask Trainor how long he works every day and he pauses before replying, almost offhandedly, "I think from 8 a.m. until 9 p.m."

That's a staggering work day.

But Joshua Evans, Trainor's guest services manager, reacted to that statement with an emphatic, "At least!"

Incredibly Trainor also manages to do a high volume of community work for organizations like the Hawaii Foodbank Coalition, which he founded.

Trainor has been known to stay on the job well into the night to troubleshoot, and to leave his bed in the wee hours to deal with a crisis.

He has a room he can sleep in at the hotel. But he chooses to make it home most nights to his wife, Lisa and their two daughters Leimomi Noel, 12, and Leimana Shannon, 5. He and his family have a condo just a few miles down the road in downtown Honolulu.

Trainor's children attend Kamehameha, a school dedicated to providing for students of Hawaiian ancestry. They dance the hula as well as practice ballet. They also love watching Irish movies and travelogues, and they love Irish dancing, he said. "They're also very proud of their Claddagh rings."

Their mother, who is Hawaiian, was once a professional hula dancer in the Don Ho Show and that's how the Trainors met.

The show was held in a now-demolished domed theater on the Hilton property. "I went every night," said Trainor with a sparkle in his eye.

"I'm kind of a driven person," he admits. "That's OK. Sometimes to sustain and be effective you need to be driven. Otherwise you can be overwhelmed."

Trainor is also meticulously detail-oriented. When he hosts VIPs, he insists on advance research.

One day last summer when he was personally supervising preparation of a suite for AOL Time Warner chief Dick Parsons he handed his staff a magazine profile on the CEO. His instruction: Read it and find clues to the man's likes and dislikes.

"What kind of music does he like?" he asked as he sifted through a stack of CDs. "What kind of movies?"

Trainor ordered a laptop for Parsons's

bedroom and required that a technician be on call for him. Sure, Parsons is a high tech industry czar. But Trainor was preparing for the outside possibility that he might not be familiar with the particular hardware the hotel was providing.

"I just have an insatiable desire to please," he said, adding that this feeling extends even to guests in the least expensive rooms.

Trainor has earned the trust of present and former heads of state and entertainment celebrities who've stayed at his property. These include Bill Clinton, George

*Blending Celtic with Hawaiian tradition is something Trainor loves to do when he sees an opportunity. In 1986, he introduced a delicious soda bread that is now in high demand at functions in Honolulu.*

H.W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, Britain's Margaret Thatcher, the Philippines' Gloria Arroyo, China's Hu Jintao, Liza Minnelli, Michael Jackson and Britney Spears.

He said he's especially lucky to work for a man with a similar mind-set. "I do have a boss – Hilton Hawaii regional senior vice president Peter Schall – and he's the ultimate hotelier – a worker," said Trainor. He said the German-born Schall spends as much time in the trenches as he does and that stokes his motivation.

Trainor's ties to Ireland are political as well as emotional. His brother's wife is a cousin of Irish President Mary McAleese, a native of Belfast. In his youth, Trainor used to see McAleese when she visited the family home as a friend of his sister.

"So occasionally we do get Irish government ministers passing through the hotel," said Trainor.

Such dignitaries have included Minister for Education Noel Dempsey and parliamentarian Noel O'Flynn.

One day Trainor hopes to host the president herself.

When the Irish come to his hotel, Trainor makes sure they catch the aloha spirit.

He convinced two visiting Dublin couples, Pat and Sanora Kelly and Paul and Mary Colgan, to join in designing the hotel's float, which won top prize in the Aloha Festivals Floral Parade on Sept. 13. The Kellys and Colgans helped place 5,000 plum red and cloud white carnations, 10,000 deep purple orchids, 12,000 gold and yellow marigolds, 4,000 maroon straw flowers, 500 yellow spider mums,

300 red ginger stocks and a variety of other tropical flowers on the 35-foot float that depicted musical instruments of the hula.

The Dubliners experienced what Trainor would call mana, one of his favorite Hawaiian words.

"You can say 'this is good mana,' or 'this has a lot of mana' – it means a lot of love. The Irish and the Hawaiians have a lot in common and this would fit right into the Irish vocabulary."

Blending Celtic with Hawaiian tradition is something Trainor loves to do when he

sees an opportunity. In 1986 he introduced a delicious soda bread that is now in high demand at functions in Honolulu.

"The soda bread was actually a recipe provided by my (late) mother who received it from her mother," said Trainor.

"How it came about was that we have this upscale restaurant called Bali By The Sea, and we thought one of the important things was to have a good bread. I wrote to my mother and asked her to give me some recipes for Irish bread. So she sent me all kinds of recipes for soda bread, wheaten bread, and farm bread. The one that stood out was Irish fruit soda bread."

But Trainor said he emphasizes the uniqueness of Hawaiian culture with the same vigor he'd represent Irish culture if he were a hotelier in Ireland.

While many Hawaiians complain that Waikiki Beach's glitzy tourist venues are failing to properly represent native culture, Trainor insists on presenting the genuine article.

"Nowhere else in the world do you have this Hawaiian culture," said Trainor. "We need to be respectful of it, and we always need to promote it and perpetuate a Hawaiian sense of place so that when a person gets here they realize, 'We're in Hawaii.' Not somewhere else."

Auntie Elsie, the lady in charge of Trainor's Hawaiiana program at the hotel, walks up to him in the main lobby and gives him a warm hug.

With her help, Trainor has fostered the development of classes for guests in lei-making, coconut frond weaving, and hula.

Shortly after he arrived at the hotel in

the late 1980s, Trainor conceived of and began staging an elaborate cultural revue called the "King's Jubilee" every Friday night. It's an hour-long performance by the "Super Pool" of Polynesian music and dance presided over by a native playing the role of 19th century King David Kalakaua. The former Hawaiian Kingdom's "Merrie Monarch" was known for his dedication to the arts.

The show culminates in a breathtaking fireworks exhibit on the adjacent beach that seems to explode directly over the heads of the audience sitting poolside. The sounds reverberate through Waikiki and surrounding neighborhoods.

The spectacular pyrotechnics are a weekly monument to the Irish GM's impact on a community 7,000 miles from his native land.

Trainor emerges from his office at 10 p.m. on the night of the King's Jubilee, an hour or so after the fireworks, to join some

people having dinner at the beachside Rainbow Lanai restaurant. He doesn't eat but sips alternately on a coffee and a Coca-Cola while chatting with the energy he must have shown at lunch. Within an hour he looks at his watch and excuses himself. He has to get back to the office for more paperwork he considers necessary to complete.

The paperwork includes memos of "thanks" to certain employees whose contributions he noticed during the week.

It's not something Trainor really has to do on a Friday night, but he does it nonetheless.

He said it's something he learned.

"The more responsibility you get, the more you're trying to accomplish, and the more you recognize the special talent and commitment of people. You gravitate towards that, and you depend on them. It's actually a very good feeling. A very peaceful feeling." □



### WILLIAM SHANAHAN COLGATE-PALMOLIVE

Colgate-Palmolive is the global giant behind such household brand names as Colgate, Ajax, and, of course, Irish Spring, and William Shanahan is the driving force behind the company's success. As president, Shanahan manages all the geographic divisions as well as the global marketing group, research and development, information technology and manufacturing. He joined the company back in 1965 and was elected COO in 1989 and president in 1992. Shanahan earned a degree in geography from Dartmouth College, and choosing the road less taken, he played pro basketball in the Philippines before entering the corporate world. Colgate-Palmolive's international presence allows him to indulge his lifelong passion – travel. A third-generation Irish-American, he traces his roots to Tipperary. He is married to *Irish America's* Wall Street 50 honoree Rose Marie Fox who is the managing director of Cornerstone Financial Co. LLC. They have four grown children.



### PATRICK T. STOKES ANHEUSER-BUSCH COMPANIES

President and CEO of Anheuser-Busch Companies, Patrick Stokes is also the chairman of Anheuser-Busch International. He began his career with the \$15 billion international corporation 34 years ago in the corporate planning department. His unique career path has since taken him from responsibility for purchasing all of Anheuser-Busch's raw materials and packaging to chief executive officer of Campbell-Taggart and Eagle Snacks when those divisions were owned by Anheuser-Busch Cos., Inc.; back to Anheuser-Busch, Inc., the beer company, as president and chief executive officer; and ultimately, to president and chief executive officer of the diversified corporation. In 1991 he was presented with the Boston College Award of Excellence in Commerce.

A second-generation Irish-American, his father's family is from Limerick. Stokes travels to Ireland twice a year and enjoys the people and pubs. He and his wife live in West St. Louis County and have three children.



### SUSAN KELLIHER UNGARO FAMILY CIRCLE MAGAZINE

Susan Kelliher Ungaro recently celebrated her 25th anniversary as Editor-In-Chief of the much-loved magazine *Family Circle*. During that time, the magazine has received numerous journalism awards, including a National Magazine Award and various Sigma Delta Chi awards for public interest reporting. Ungaro received the President's Award from the New Jersey Press Women's Association in 1995. In 1998, she received the William Paterson University Legacy Award and was honored by the NOW Legal Defense Fund with the Muriel Fox communications award for professional excellence and commitment to advocacy journalism. She is president of the American Society of Magazine Editors and serves on the boards of directors of the Brazelton Foundation, the National Marrow Foundation and H.E.L.P. (Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged). Ungaro's parents were both born in Castlegregory, County Kerry. She lives in New Jersey with her husband and three children.



### MICHAEL F. WALSH DELTA DENTAL AND DECARE INTERNATIONAL

President and CEO of Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota and DeCare International, Michael Walsh heads up the 650 employees and \$728 million in revenues for this business. Under Walsh's tenure, the organization has seen an average 20 percent increase in revenue per year during the recent five-year period. He has 25 years of experience in the health care industry and spent 12 years at Empire BlueCross and BlueShield in New York.

With a doctorate in economics, he served on the adjunct faculty in the graduate school of business and health administration at NYU where he received the Professor of the Year award in 1986.

Married with three children, he is a native of County Mayo. He is a member of the University of St. Thomas Center for Irish Studies and his favorite Irish poet is Conaire Pararg, who Walsh feels most reflects the West of Ireland. □