

# THE GREATER GOOD

Life Lessons from Hawai'i's Leaders

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Life Lessons from Hawai‘i’s Leaders

Evan and Kari Leong



**WATERMARK**  
PUBLISHING

*Dedicated to our sons,  
Buddy and Kolton Leong*

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*“Find your passion.  
Dream big  
and don't give up!”*



Duane Kurisu

*Partner*

**KURISU & FERGUS**

*Chairman and Chief Executive Officer*

**AIO GROUP**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Evan & Kari Leong, Co-Founders, Greater Good Inc.*

During this year's Greater Good interviews, we were often reminded of our community leaders and trailblazers who have paved the way to make things smoother and easier for all of us. "You did not get here alone," many said. "Think about all of those people who supported you and sacrificed so that you could go to a good school, get a good job, raise a healthy family ..."

We want to take this opportunity to thank the many special people who have guided us through this journey of living to learn. First to Duane Kurisu, who taught us that business is not healthy without the support of the community and the community is not healthy without the support of business. Because of the few minutes you took to explain to Evan the secret to your success, we have revamped our life and thought process. Without your advice and guidance, we would still be chasing the golden ring without a clear path or purpose. Thank you for always being available to listen and to guide and support our journey.

Thank you to our interviewees, who took time out of their busy schedules to share their stories and learning lessons with us. We appreciate your anecdotes, philosophies, stories of celebration and learning experiences. Many have learned from your voices over the radio waves, television, Internet, and now many will learn from your words. In all forms, you're helping our future leaders make positive changes in business while making a difference in our community.

A special thanks to Clint Arnoldus and Central Pacific Bank for believing in us and our vision from the start. Your support allowed us to take our message and stories of Hawai'i's business and community leaders to the global community. Mahalo to Rick Blangiardi and the KGMB9 team for expanding the message to television. Thank you for believing in our growth and ability to become "television people."

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To our boys, Buddy and Kolton, we love you more than we can express. You have brought so much love and laughter into our relationship and you have veered us away from working all the time. We hope this book will be useful for you throughout your lives. We hope that you will use the knowledge to be successful in whatever you choose to do and whatever path you take. Just remember to be passionate, be a good person, say your prayers and never forget that we love you to the moon and back.

## FOREWORD

by Mufi Hannemann, Mayor of Honolulu

My life is guided by a number of precepts—I’ve dubbed them “Mufi’s Maxims”—that set forth many of the ideals and everyday practices I apply in my responsibilities as mayor of the City and County of Honolulu, and which I’ve encouraged the members of my cabinet to follow as they go about their duties.

These maxims were not a revelation, not some creation whipped up in a burst of creative energy. Rather, they were gathered and refined through years of living and work experience in Hawai‘i and around the world, both positive and negative, much like the ideas and thoughts being shared in *The Greater Good: Life Lessons from Hawai‘i’s Leaders*.

One of them is, “Leave this a better place than you found it.” It’s a maxim I’ve followed throughout my career in public service. Public service, for me, has never been about power or prestige or the usual trappings of elected office. It has always been about using God’s gifts to make this a better place, to serve and sacrifice for others, to contribute to the greater good; these have been motivating factors in driving me to public service and to creating the Pacific Century Fellows leadership program.

It hasn’t been easy, believe me. Ours is a democracy, not an autocracy. People have a say in the directions and goals of our city, the state and the nation, and they’re not hesitant about expressing those views. It’s a near-impossibility to get a group of people to agree on what they want to eat for lunch, let alone getting them to agree on a complex issue. But I think that if your intentions are good, you keep the debate open and honest, and you’re motivated by a sincere desire to make a meaningful contribution, then you can achieve great things and make this a better place than you found it.

There’s one more point to be made about the purpose of this book. The day I received my high school diploma, I was on top of the world. Surrounded by my parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends; oodles of flower leis; a wonderful high school education behind me and a Harvard University degree before me, I couldn’t have felt more assured of my place on earth.

My father, Gustav, a soft-spoken, humble immigrant who had labored tirelessly without complaint for many years and who helped my mother, Faiaso, to raise their seven children, then stepped up to me to put a lei around my neck. As he did, he whispered in my ear, “Son, you know nothing.”

I had just completed six years at one of the finest college prep schools in the United States, earned the Iolani Headmaster’s Award, been named an all-star in basketball and football, completed a term as student body president and been accepted to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Cornell and Stanford—and I still knew nothing, in my dad’s eyes. In essence, he was encouraging me to be humble, stay focused on education and keep thirsting for knowledge.

My Dad’s Dictum, if you will, has stayed with me for the past 35 years. Indeed, we know nothing. There’s always more to learn, a new idea on the horizon, a different opinion, a unique perspective to add to the mix. The people who have generously shared their unique wisdom, experiences, and thoughts in *The Greater Good* tell us that learning is a life long journey, and that we should continue to learn from the experience and wisdom of others.

We can all be grateful to Evan and Kari Leong for their commitment to the betterment of our community, our state and our nation and their inspiring work for the good of all.

## INTRODUCTION

*Evan Leong, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Good Inc.*

I hate doing yard work but I'm fascinated with farming. I have no desire to be a farmer, yet I love the potential in farming—taking a little seed and growing it into a productive crop to be harvested year after year.

I learned this sense of providence in the same yard where my grandfather planted his first tree. My Gung Gung (Chinese for grandfather) was a Chinese-American who worked extremely hard to educate and provide for his family. In his free time he planted and cared for many fruit trees in our yard. We have five mango trees, six lychee trees, orange trees, lemon trees, pomelo trees and several others.

I wasn't there to watch him prepare the ground, plant the seeds and nurture the growth, but I definitely enjoyed eating the fruit. Generations have been raised at my Gung Gung's home in Mānoa Valley, that verdant suburb of Honolulu. It has been more than 20 years since my Gung Gung passed away, but the fruit from the seeds he planted, almost a century ago, is still enjoyed by our family.

Fruit trees weren't the only thing he passed down to the generations. My Gung Gung also taught us important lessons in life based on his own experiences. These experiences were the "seeds of knowledge" of his life, which shaped him into who he was and later helped shape the people that we have become.

Each experience is like a small seed of knowledge. A fruit tree can feed people for generations to come, and the same goes for these trees of success. The beauty of seeds of knowledge is that they don't have to be our own.

I once heard at a seminar: "Find someone who has what you want. Think how they think. Do what they do and you'll get what they have."

That is what this book is all about. In the past year and a half, my wife, Kari, and I have interviewed hundreds of the most prominent business, community and government leaders in Hawai'i and around the world to find out how they think and what their life experiences have been. We are on a quest to find the very best "seeds of knowledge" that these people are planting.

On this journey, we found the same underlying core values mentioned over and over again in the interviews. Even though the stories and experiences are quite different, they're each built on the same basic foundations.

Our goal at Greater Good is to be a vehicle to pass along values that were a part of each leader's foundation for success, to help you create your own definition of a successful life.

While conducting the interviews, we also noticed something intriguing. No matter what preconceived notion we had of our interviewees, we always came out of the interviews with a different perspective. We realized that many of these successful people started out like you and I and developed into high achievers. Childhood pictures are under each of the quotes as a reminder that we all start off as children and our choices and decisions along the way make up who we become.

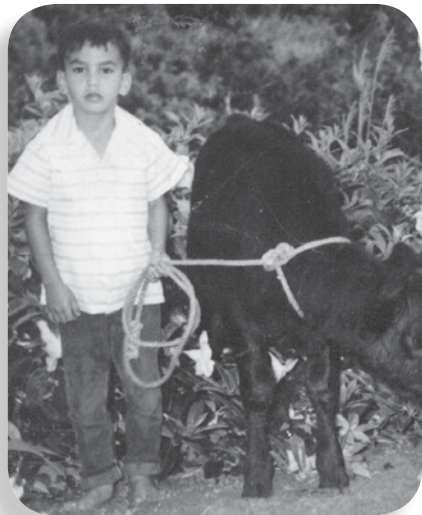
While each person has his or her own definition of success, we can all agree that we'd like to live a fulfilling life. The good news is that life can be even better than what we expect, if we know what to focus on. The main point is to climb the right "ladder of life." Many people climb the ladder of life and reach the top only to realize that they've been on the wrong ladder.

In the Adam Sandler movie *Click*, Sandler's character is asked, "Remember the leprechaun? The one from the cereal ad. He's always chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but when he gets there, at the end of the day, it's just corn flakes."

As it turns out, what was first envisioned as a success-in-business book has become a book on life itself. It's a book about making our lives and making a difference. It's about finding the pot of gold instead of the corn flakes. And it all starts with finding our purpose, which is where we begin ...



*“Sometimes you cannot see  
with your eyes (therefore)  
you have to look inside here;  
meaning close to your  
chest in your heart.  
And navigate with your heart.”*



Nainoa Thompson  
*Navigator and Sail Master of the Hōkūle‘a*  
**TRUSTEE AT KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS**

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## **WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE?**



## 1

**WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE?**

*Evan Leong, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Good Inc.*

I was waiting in line at the airport one day, when I overheard the ticket agent ask the person in front of me for her ticket. She responded that she hadn't bought one yet, but that she had a voucher for a free ticket and wanted to redeem it. When the agent asked where she wanted to go, she said, "I'm not sure. Why don't you choose a place for me?"

I know this sounds silly, but this is how many of us live our lives. We may have a ticket to live our life, but we often let others choose the destination.

Mike May, CEO of Hawaiian Electric Company, Hawai'i's largest utility, said it best:

"If you don't have a plan, you're going to be part of somebody else's."

This is how I lived my life for many years. I plodded along with no real destination, and grew frustrated because I wasn't getting where I thought I should be. I'd let someone else tell me what my destination should be and just headed in the direction they set. I realize now that I wasn't doing what I was supposed to be doing—pursuing the goals I should have been following—but I did it anyway. I was not in control of my life's destination. I had not yet discovered my purpose.

Finding our purpose is about finding our destination in life.

I asked myself:

*What is my life really supposed to amount to?*

*What contribution am I supposed to make?*

*Why am I here?*

*When I die, will I have accomplished what I was meant to accomplish?*

These are questions that I think a great deal about, and one day I received the answers: that my purpose is to inspire as many people as possible and to help them make a positive difference in their lives. To empower people with tools to make changes themselves—the proverbial "give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; teach a man how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." To make the world

a better place through tangible solutions. To use business as a tool to make an impact on our local, national and global community. It is my purpose to do these things in whatever time I'm allowed here on earth.

While others can help us, our real purpose is a personal calling that can only be discovered and determined by each of us individually. Our parents can tell us to go to school, get good grades and get a certain job. Our teachers can tell us what to be when we grow up. Friends can tell us one thing and the media can tell us another. But here's the dilemma: If we listen to everyone under the sun except ourselves, we inevitably allow our destination to be set by others. Is it any wonder why at that point we feel we've strayed off course? Then frustration and confusion set in, and we either accept that this is how it's going to be or we decide to make a change.

In 2004 I attended 12 funerals. In 2005, a close friend's wife was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 40. At the time, this couple's three boys were all under seven years old. She nearly died several times and I saw first-hand how quickly, and suddenly, life can end. I decided to make a change. And once I consciously identified my purpose, my whole life was transformed.

There's a lot of time to think about life—and death—while you're sitting at a funeral. A funeral can be a celebration of life or a reflection of unfulfilled potential. And while no one ever says anything negative in a eulogy, I can't help but wonder:

*Did this person fulfill their purpose?*

*Why were they here?*

*Did they make a difference that will have an impact now that they are gone?*

*Did they live the life they were meant to live?*

I wondered how a eulogy would sound if it were written for what a person's life could have been, instead of what it was. I wondered what my eulogy would be if I died suddenly? Would I have lived the life I was supposed to live? I started thinking about all the accomplishments that I thought were important, all the accolades and ego-building materializations. But in the end I could only think of whether or not I became the best I could be at that moment, and if I'd helped anyone else besides myself? My purpose and destination became clear, and I am happy to say that I am finally pursuing it.

When my time comes to leave this world, I aim to have done everything I could to inspire a eulogy like this:

“Evan Leong achieved his life’s purpose. He lived every minute with passion. He made a long-lasting, positive impact on his family, his friends and his community.”

I hope that the stories and insights in these pages will help educate, motivate and inspire you to discover your own purpose, so that your eulogy reflects what life can be when it is lived to its maximum potential.

*“The only strategy in life is to find something you were meant to do, and if you love it you’re going to do it well. When you wake up in the morning you have to say, “Man, I can’t wait to go to work.”*”



Marc C. Tilker

*President and Chief Executive Officer*  
**BEI HAWAII AND HT&T TRUCK CENTER**

## Go Home

*Jeffrey Watanabe, Non-Executive Chair of Hawaiian Electric Industries and Founding Partner of Watanabe Ing & Komeiji*

During law school, I worked under the patronage of U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye. At the time, he was a 44-year-old senator who had never lost an election. After law school, I was considering a job in Washington. As luck would have it, I was with the Senator late one night awaiting a vote. He asked me what I was going to do when I finished law school. I told him about possibly staying in Washington.

“Go home,” he said. “You owe a lot of people.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You’ve had a good education and have been provided many opportunities. You didn’t do that all by yourself, you know. Someone decided you were worthwhile and was willing to work hard so that you could have these opportunities. That’s an obligation you need to pay back.”

That was a long time ago, but the Senator’s advice is as valid today as it was then. Many of us had immigrant grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, friends, professional colleagues and communities who struggled to provide opportunities for generations that followed. That needs to be recognized.

Once I returned to Hawai‘i, fulfilling that obligation turned out to be both gratifying and fun. Interestingly, I believe it also significantly helped my business career. Fulfilling my obligations should have always been part of my life’s mission, but in my case, it was really driven by people wiser than I.

In 1971, Jeffrey Watanabe co-founded Watanabe Ing & Komeiji, LLC, one of the leading law firms in Hawai‘i. He is the non-executive chairman of the board of Hawaiian Electric Industries, a Fortune 1,000 company that supplies 93 percent of Hawai‘i’s energy needs, and is also on the boards of Alexander & Baldwin and a number of private companies in Hawai‘i and the mainland U.S. Actively engaged in the non-profit sector, Jeff is a trustee of Sesame Workshop in New York, the Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation headquartered in Honolulu and Manila, and The Nature Conservancy of Hawai‘i. He has served on the Smithsonian National Board as well as The Nature Conservancy’s Board of Governors.

*“Get out there and experience life.  
Usually a calling will find you.  
You just have to keep your eyes open  
to recognize it when it comes.  
Don’t follow the standard ways  
of doing things. Keep your mind open.  
Ask your heart what you want to do  
because too much of life nowadays  
is a little bit too preprogrammed.”*



Ed Case

*U.S. Congressman, Hawai‘i (2002–2007)*

**UNITED STATES CONGRESS**

## Be True to Yourself

*Gail Mukaihata Hannemann, Chief Executive Officer, Girl Scouts of Hawai'i*

World War II shaped the lives of not just my parents, but my entire family, which is the case for a lot of people. My parents were high school age during the war, and both of them were interned. That type of experience changes you as a human being and helps you to prioritize what is important.

As I get older, I have come to really appreciate how my parents brought us up. There were four girls and we were raised in a very traditional Japanese community, which had its pluses and its minuses. The plus was clearly the strong family connection and the values. The minus was that if you didn't fit quite into what was considered honorable or respectable, especially in professions, then you could be in a difficult situation.

Regardless, my parents told my sisters and me to do whatever we wanted in life—something that was interesting and important to us. For example, my older sister became a linguist, and she's working with educational technology now. The sister younger than me studied to be a dietician at a time when there were very few Asian women in the field, and then my youngest sister grew to be an artist. We all took non-traditional paths.

The thing that I remember most about my parents is that they were always caring about others. They always told us that—because of their circumstances when they were held in Japanese camps during World War II—people did things out of the goodness of their heart. When they left the camp, my mother went to New York, and then to Philadelphia to get her education. My dad went elsewhere. They both recall how

people took them in and did things to care for them—and that is what they have always taught us to do.

Not long ago, my aunt told me a story about a day that she had experienced with my mom. They were outside of their home unloading the car after coming home from a trip together. Busily unloading their things, they noticed a strange car pull up to the house with a couple and a child.

My aunt asked my mom, “Do you know these people?”

“I don't think so,” she replied.

But they were clearly coming to talk to my mom. Of course, my aunt was a little concerned and just stood there as they approached my mom.

They said, “We just wanted to come by and thank you.”

My mom was puzzled and asked, “Why?”

The lady said, “You probably don't remember, but it was about six years ago and we came to buy your car. We were just getting started and I was pregnant.”

She continued, “We didn't have much money, but we had to move. Out of the kindness of your heart, you just gave the car to us.”

These people came back to thank my parents for giving them a break in life, because that made all the difference in the world to them as they got their start. This is just one example of acts of kindness that my sisters and I lived with all the time. Our parents taught us not to just look at ourselves, and also to never look at the initial circumstances. We need to look at our life in a fuller context to give it meaning. At the end of the day life is about people. To give to others—that's where the richness of life lies. Get involved not in other people's business, but in other people. Help enrich other people's lives; it's really important.

Gail Mukaihata Hannemann is the CEO of The Girl Scouts of Hawai'i and the First Lady of the City and County of Honolulu. Just prior to joining the Girl Scouts, Gail served as vice president of corporate development for SMS Inc., one of Hawai'i's premier research and marketing firms. She spent more than 15 years in Washington D.C. as a congressional aide and professional staff member of the U.S. House of Representatives prior to moving to Hawai'i in 1992. Gail is the past chair of the Hawai'i Arts Alliance and serves on the board of the Children's Alliance of Hawai'i, a non-profit organization dedicated to making life better for sexually and physically abused children and their families living on the island of O'ahu.

*“I like to ask people  
what they want written  
on their tombstones.  
For myself, I would like  
to have written,  
‘He made a difference,’  
i.e., I would like to think  
that during my lifetime  
I made a difference in making  
the world a little bit better.”*



John Dean  
*Managing General Partner*  
**STARTUP CAPITAL VENTURES**

## Bringing Honor Home

*Daniel K. Inouye, Senator, United States Senate*

I was the eldest son in the family, and in my generation that made a difference. My father was the eldest; my grandfather was the eldest; in fact, I was the seventh generation of first-borns. My grandparents worked in the field on Kaua'i and my father began his education at 14. So they looked upon me as the oldest son to do something big with my life, to do something that would make them proud. I was brought up with that sense. Even from an early age I remember being told, “Never dishonor your family.”

It's rather difficult to tell my son today to “never dishonor your family,” but in my generation it was a common phrase. “Don't dishonor us. Don't bring any shame to us.”

This stuck with me through my life, and then when I was 17, Pearl Harbor was attacked. I soon found out that I was an enemy alien because of a decree of our government. My parents were Japanese and as a result, I could not wear the uniform of this land. I, too, wanted to protect our country but had to wait. Finally in early 1943, the authorities opened the doors and my friends and I volunteered for the Army. I served in the military as an 18-year-old private; I became a sergeant, then eventually a lieutenant and then was promoted to captain.

The big day for me was April 21, because on this day I received my last battle wound. I have vague memories of the moment, because I just rushed the hills with adrenaline flowing. According to witnesses, I was shot in my right elbow and my arm just about fell off. With my good left hand, I picked up and threw the grenade that had been clutched in my

Senator Daniel K. Inouye is the U.S. Senate's third most senior member. In 1959, Inouye won election to the U.S. House of Representatives as Hawai'i's first congressman. Elected to the Senate in 1962, he is serving his seventh consecutive term. In 1943, the 18-year-old Inouye enlisted in the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the famed “Go For Broke” regiment. He spent 20 months in Army hospitals after losing his right arm. Inouye was honored with the Distinguished Service Cross (the second highest award for military valor), Bronze Star, Purple Heart with oak cluster and 12 other medals and citations. His Distinguished Service Cross was upgraded to a Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for military valor.



right hand. Then I picked up my gun and I started to charge. I also had gunshot wounds in my stomach area and right leg.

In World War II, the battles were so intense and large that the casualty rates were in the hundreds of thousands. The field hospitals weren't able to accommodate the wounded and we had no helicopters. In my case, I was evacuated at 3 p.m. and I got to the field hospital at midnight; it took nine hours. When I reached the hospital, there were a bunch of people on stretchers. A small crew of physicians and attendants came along to look at us and rate our status. They pointed to us and said, "Tent No. 1, tent No. 2 and tent No. 3." In other words, tent 1: treat them right away, tent 2: take it easy because this one can last a long time, and tent 3: forget it, that's someone on the verge of death.

I was assigned to tent No. 3. Eventually, the chaplain came by and said, "God loves you."

"I'm certain he loves me. But I'm not ready to see him yet," I replied.

He looked at me and said, "You know, I believe you."

"Yes, I got a whole life ahead of me," I remarked.

He called in the staff and said, "Take him to tent No. 1."

I was immediately moved and had 17 transfusions. The crew did not make a mistake in moving me. But if they hadn't looked after me for a couple of hours, I think I would have just faded away.

While recovering in the military rehab center I was able to reflect upon my service to our country and the government's power. I began to realize that the government made a lot of decisions, and one of the most difficult decisions was going to war. There were other decisions that affected all of our lives—education, health conditions, environment, etc. I felt that as a U.S. citizen, I did my part in protecting our country. But I wanted to do more.

I was wounded four times before getting out of the service. When I was released, I felt that I should do something to help people. Now, that may sound high and mighty, but I meant it. After spending time in the military, watching my friends die or get wounded, I couldn't see myself going back to the plantation way of life.

I remembered a conversation I had with my friend, retired Senator Bob Dole, while we were in rehab, regarding his plans once he returned home. He had his life all planned out. Bob told me that he wanted to make a difference in people's lives and he shared how government was

going to help him do it. He was going to study law and run for office to become a senator. Though I had planned to become a doctor, which was now out of the question, I decided that Bob's plan sounded good for me as well. To the chagrin of my folks, because politicians were not highly regarded at that time (and in some quarters they're still not highly regarded) I went to law school and became an assistant prosecutor for one year. Then I ran for the Territorial Legislature and won.

In 1959, Hawai'i became part of the United States of America. I was honored to be elected as Hawai'i's first Congressman and looked forward to seeing my friends, like Bob Dole.

When I was sworn in as a member of the Senate in 1962, my father came along. We were at lunch at that time with the majority leader, Mike Mansfield, whom I got along with very well. A telephone call came in and Mike answered the phone and said, "Dan, the President wants to speak with you."

I picked it up, "Yes, Mr. President."

"I hear your father's in town."

I said, "Yes, sir."

"Why don't you bring him around?"

I said, "I'd love to."

"When can you do that?"

I said, "I'm free now."

"Then bring him around."

So I took my father to the White House to meet President John F. Kennedy. My father was in absolute awe. Being from the plantation, he never imagined the opportunity to be in the White House, nor meet the President of the United States.

Once we were finished with our visit, the Press Corps was waiting. All of the cameras were focused on us as we exited because I had just become a new senator.

The press asked me, "Can you tell us about your meeting with the President? Did you discuss home rule and civil rights?"

I said, "No, this was my father's meeting—not mine. So you better interview him."

My father looked at the camera and he said, "I can die now!"

The newspaper people were stunned.

He then continued by saying, "I've just seen the President of the United States, I've seen my son become a United States Senator. I can die now."

It was at that moment that I knew my father was proud of me and I had fulfilled his dream of honoring my family. But it isn't all about that. I had fulfilled my own dream of loving my work, helping to make a difference in people's lives and being a part of the government's decisions that impact us all in a positive way.

*“I knew, from the way that  
I was raised, that I needed  
to be involved in the community.  
It's part of my being,  
it's part of who I am.”*



Crystal K. Rose  
*Partner*

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