

# Doug Mossman: There is life after 5-0

By Venus Lantini

When Hollywood talent scouts plucked Honolulu-born Douglas Mossman from the islands, they knew they had a bona-fide piece of Hawaii in their hands.

Mossman, of Hawaii Five-O fame, played Lieutenant Frank Kamana, a bomb expert who transferred to the Honolulu Police Department, in the popular television series that ran for 12 years, from 1968 to 1980.

The 63-year-old actor, now director of sales and marketing at the Hawaii Ima Theater in Waikiki, has fond memories of how his humble beginnings transformed him into a bright, young local star who made it in Hollywood.

"I was bitten by the acting bug so to speak in third grade at Kapalama School, the very first play, 'Why the Chimes Rang,' a morality play. I thought, 'Oh, this is good.' I found out if you did something, you said something, people went like that," as Mossman clapped his hands in an approving audience would.

"That applause, that acceptance is the great thing about performing. And people say it's for the money. Everybody gets paid money. Doctors get money, but when he finishes an operation, the audience doesn't (clap-clap-clap)," Mossman said, excitedly.

That first taste of fame - in third grade - was only the beginning of a satisfying career for Mossman, a native Hawaiian whose middle name, Kinilau, means "many thousands of relatives."

He's 75 percent Hawaiian. The other quarter includes Scottish, English, and Spanish. Mossman's father was a book-keeper and his mother, a nurse. He went to several parochial schools in the early years and then onto Kamehameha School



in the eighth grade. During his high school years, he said he excelled in singing, acting and debating.

"They had the Christmas plays and there was good emphasis in vocal scenes, music, a little bit of dance, but Kamehameha at the time was not known for theatrical (programs)," he said.

After high school, Mossman went to the University of Hawaii and immediately entered the drama program there.

"I was a freshman when I did my first show production. I was thrilled to death. I usually played a foreigner, the french kid, or the Italian kid, or some kind of kid. Couldn't play the haole part, 'cause I wasn't quite the haole kid except when we did Shakespeare. As a 17-year-old, I was trying out for every-

thing," he remembered.

Mossman's college journey to an acting career was interrupted in 1953 when the National Guard shipped him to Korea. While overseas, he went to an officer candidate school and continued his infantry training. But the military couldn't take away that acting bug. He continued to do plays, even while in the military.

After serving in the National Guard, he used the GI Bill to help pay for his tuition at the Pasadena Playhouse in California to continue his path to stardom. According to a February, 1993 Hawaii Magazine article, written by Ron Jacobs, Mossman was the first person from Hawaii to attend this college of theater arts. Furthermore, the magazine deemed him the best prepared actor of all the local actors of the Hawaii Five-O cast.

"I'm lookin' at all these people from different parts of the country. They're all haole. As a Hawaiian, it was like 'what am I?' It was different because they did all these shows and plays and all I did was the senior play at Kamehameha and the Christmas play, and just a few things in the service. They seemed to be so much more legitimate," he said.

"I said to myself, 'That's okay. I'm just going to go up there and give it my best shot.' We started to do some of the classes. I wasn't so bad. I could do some interpretation. There were things that I could offer, some interesting things. And I was a nut about reading, read everything I could get my hands on. And a nut about films, so when we used films, I knew a lot about them," he said.

Mossman said he did all the Italian, Indian and Mexican roles. He described his first job in television. He played an Indian in the movie, "Broken Arrow."

The director looked him over and asked if he could ride a horse. Mossman yelled, "Like a champ!" Of course, Mossman lied to get the job and was scolded by the director later. A double played Mossman in riding scenes. Mossman enjoyed the close-up shots.

When Mossman graduated from Pasadena Playhouse, a lot of his classmates ended up working in a restaurant called North Woods Inn in Monrovia, just outside of Pasadena. Both Mossman and his classmate Dustin Hoffman attempted to apply only to find out that there was only a busboy position open.

"He didn't want to do it. He said, 'To hell with this place. I'm going to New York!'" Mossman said, "I took the job."

"You see you work to make money so you could get your pictures taken or get your nose fixed or teeth capped," he joked.

In 1959, three weeks after Mossman answered a casting call for a new series called "Hawaiian Eye," his dream began, according to Jacobs.

Mossman was hired as a sometimes actor and technical director of the series, which was produced by Warner Brothers on ABC. He spent much of his time transforming sets into a Hawaiian scene, carefully making things look authentic and real for the viewer. He worked with such celebrities as Connie Stevens, Robert Conrad and Poncie Ponce, another local actor.

After the series ended, Mossman went to New York where he co-produced the Hawaii exhibit at the 1964 World's Fair. He returned to Los Angeles for several years, then came home and worked in television and radio.

"So being in Hawaii and having a lot of family here was really a great help. It was the right thing for me at the right time and I was on a contract with Warner Brothers studios, my god, what a dream!" he said.

"I walked on the streets with great stars of that time: Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Betty Davis, Joan Crawford - all the major stars! And they're paying me money. I had an office, my name on the door, a parking space. I could drive right onto the studio. I felt like I died and went to heaven!" Mossman said.

Although Mossman wasn't the focus of attention, he was glad he was there to participate. His family and friends were all proud that local boy Mossman made it to Hollywood.

After "Hawaiian Eye" ended, Mossman became a businessman and ran a Hollywood hideaway two blocks from the Warner Brothers and Universal Studios. The nightclub and Chinese restaurant, called The China Trader, became a hotspot for Hollywood actors and island entertainers. It became a mecca for new music and a hangout for the stars. Andy Williams, famous for his rendition of the "Hawaiian Wedding



## From the scrapbook

Doug Mossman was the first native Hawaiian to graduate from Pasadena Playhouse. Dustin Hoffman was a classmate. He is pictured above in a publicity shot from the Hawaiian Eye television series. Another local actor Poncie Ponce, left, also made a name for himself on that series. In the photo at the far left, Mossman mugs with Larry Minetti during a break in a Magnum, P.I. shooting.

Song," frequented the club. Actors like Elvis Presley, Jack Palance, and Don Ho enjoyed the atmosphere. Dick Van Dyke would strum his banjo and try out new tunes. Then, in 1968, came Five-O, which lasted for Mossman until 1980.

After the Five-O years, Mossman hooked up with Chuck Machado, who made the Hawaiian luau a hit. Again,

another part of Mossman's life peaked, for the luau attracted his fellow Five-O actors. Jack Lord visited the luau from time to time, surprising the patrons, and leaving their mouths hanging in awe. The Brothers Cazimero and Don Ho performed and made the Hawaiian party a smash, just like The China Trader. Don Ho's career was taking off. And Mossman was just glad to be a part of everything.

Today, Mossman still performs. He's done episodes of "Jake and the Fatman" and he recently played a judge in "One West Waikiki."

His acting career has not been forgotten. The Hawaii Five-O cast will be reuniting once again in Los Angeles on Oct. 25-27 and in Waikiki on Oct. 28 to Nov. 3. This reunion will be at the Tahitian Lanai, right next to the Ilikai Hotel, which was featured in opening shots of the popular television series.

Mossman said he never really dreamed that he would ever accomplish what he did in the early years, "but I always thought that's where I should be," he said. In other words, he didn't hope that Hollywood would be a reality - he knew he had a place in the stars.

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