

MacArthur returns for *Hawaii Five-0* revival

BY JAMES MACARTHUR

April 3

I decided to do this month's interview – with myself – for one main reason. As I write this, I am in the middle of a five-hour flight to Honolulu. Now going to Hawaii is always a pleasurable experience, but in this case, it is also most unexpected.

Twenty-nine years ago, at almost this same time, I was winging my way to Hawaii to begin the new television series *Hawaii Five-0* created by Leonard Freeman for CBS. The show starred Jack Lord, myself, Zulu, and Kam Fong, with other actors playing occasional repeating roles such as Richard Denning, who played the governor.

We were all thrilled when, after a few years, we were one of the top-rated shows, not only in the United States, but also in England, Germany, and Japan. *Hawaii Five-0* was aired in some 80 countries around the globe.

The state of Hawaii could never have afforded the worldwide publicity that *Five-0* brought to it. Tourism soared, hotels were built, thousands of jobs were created, and CBS was pouring millions into the Hawaiian economy.

It took 12 years for *Hawaii Five-0* to die naturally of old age, and I don't think it would have succumbed even then if our boss Leonard Freeman had not died.

Even today reruns air all over the world to millions of people. So, I suppose it should have come as no surprise when the phone rang and my agent said, "CBS is starting *Five-0* again." Still, you could have knocked me over with a feather. I wondered why they were calling me, as I figured my gun-toting days were over. Well, I was right! They wanted me to play the GOVERNOR! Governor Dan Williams – my old character in the show – now wily and political. No more booking for this Dano!



MacArthur as Detective Dan Williams in original series.

The new show, written by and produced for CBS by Stephen J. Cannell, will star Gary Busey and Russell Wong. The format will be familiar but not identical. There is no McGarrett – in short it will be a *Five-0* of the 90s, not the 60s.

Also, I am happy to report there was nary a bad word or bared bosom in the pilot script. Hurrah for Steve Cannell!

I was very happy that many of the former *Five-0* players were included in the pilot. You can see Kam Fong and Zulu and Herman Wedemayer, as well as Harry Endo and Moe Keala...so many good friends.

Will the show make it on to the fall network schedule? Who knows? All we can do is try to make as good a show as possible and let the chips fall where they will.

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I'm back on the plane from Hawaii to the mainland with four days of whirlwind shooting behind me.

I can report that the new *Hawaii Five-0* is going to be a very interesting show. Gary Busey plays a wonderful, offbeat character, while Russ Wong, a handsome young actor, is very solid in the new team.

Elsie Sniffen, a Hawaii beauty with a smile that lights up a room, Steven Flynn, who can have a very impish quality, and Andy Bumatai, one of Hawaii's really funny performers, fill out the cast.

Our director, Bradford May, does a rare double. He is also the cinematographer! We had a wonderful crew, mostly from Hawaii, who are really hoping a good, long-running series will come back to their shores.

I think the hardest part for me was constantly being called "sir" or Mr. MacArthur...funny what happens when you get white hair!

MacArthur, star of stage, screen, and television, interviews celebrities each month for Senior World.