

"Old is Gold"



Sometimes it felt like they were retrofitting the whole bloomin' world for access -- although best not to complain about a booming market. And HaleAkamai, although a small architecture/engineering firm, was well-known for its innovative "smart house" designs. He stepped on board the City Shuttle -- his firm subscribed to its transit services -- specified "Aina Haina," and thought about change.

Since 1990 Hawaii's population had "greyed" considerably and as the middle class aged, becoming less active or even infirm in later years, they demanded greater accessibility in public places and at home, and had the clout and resources to get it. Accessibility in 2014 meant more than just redesign of physical space, it meant installing touch or voice activated robotics to enhance both the safety and independence of the infirm or disabled. Creating a firm that wedded architecture with robotics and information system design was his best inspiration. Its economic success meant he could move out of his parents' ohana compound -- he could design a safe haven of his own for himself, his kids, and his grandkids. After all, his parents still had his brother and sister and their families to keep them company.

Not that his parents needed company -- they were among the active seniors, who'd benefited from advances in genetic analysis and genetic medicine. The tendency to certain diseases, like colon cancer, could be spotted and corrected before it occurred. Longer life with better health resulted. Of course, it also meant seniors hung on to jobs longer -- mandatory retirement was long gone -- spent less money on medicine, and had more money for recreation, travel, or luxury services -- or renovating their homes. The corporations who'd survived into '01 had been those who'd focused on the "seniors market."

And it was fortunate that people were healthier and worked longer -- the government's social safety nets had almost completely collapsed under the twin burdens of ineffective bureaucracies and declining revenues -- "Generation X" simply had too few people to support social benefits for the aging Boomer generation. The government revenue crunch -- at state as well as federal levels -- forced public agencies to downsize, reducing both middle management and many service providers. By 2005, the government merely monitored how effectively and appropriately corporations and private non-profit organizations offered what in the 20th century had been public services: education, health care, security, parks, and human services. The government also tried, less effectively, to reduce inequities and redistribute wealth via various tax schemes, but none so far had worked well. Anyone who entered the 21st century with a job and a pieces of real estate was doing well; anyone who hadn't, wasn't.

Aina Haina; he slid his company transit card through the miledebit as he exited -- the miles would be logged to their corporate account -- and considered today's client. She had made her fortune early, speculating in genetic engineering stocks, and gone on to co-found one of the largest gene cartels, whose stockpiles of pure gene stock included over a hundred thousand species in high demand. With her fortune made, her energy these days was focused on community efforts such as renovating unused elementary and secondary schools for use in lifelong learning and cross-generation mentoring programs. She lobbied other corporations to contribute to this program and other non-profit social service providers, arguing that healthier, better educated, economically secure people were more productive and innovative employees.

