

A Dream Called America



There is a place in Hawaii called the Kualoa Ranch. The ranch rests on 4,000 acres of some of the most breathtaking scenery on the island of Oahu. Visions of God's handiwork can be seen in the dense rain forests, open valleys, beautiful white beaches, and majestic mountains that characterize the property. Though you wouldn't know it, you have most probably seen the ranch as it has been the backdrop of many television shows and films. If you have seen *Jurassic Park*, *Windtalkers*, *Pearl Harbor*, *Godzilla*, *Tears of the Sun*, or *50 First Dates* then you have—through moving pictures—been to the Kualoa Ranch.

While the beauty and grandeur of the ranch is breathtaking, it is actually the history of the ranch that I find most fascinating. Kualoa Ranch was established in 1850 when King Kamehameha III sold the land to a missionary doctor, who had served as his personal advisor.

For over a hundred years the ranch sustained itself in agriculture and cattle, but as time passed, the income from these sources was no longer sustainable so the family diversified the ranch and entered the tourism industry. Now people from all over the world come to see this beautiful land and visit the places where Kings were trained and where films are made. You can still see remnants of the many movies that have been filmed there including the famous entrance gate to Jurassic Park.

You never know who you might see at the ranch. Just a few months ago, George Clooney was at the ranch scouting locations for a film he is working on. And all the while, the ranch continues to operate as a working cattle ranch.

You and I wouldn't see anything unusual or particularly unique about that. After all, businesses diversify all the time. If your business is no longer making money diversification is automatically a consideration. However, a few months ago, a group of businessmen from Japan came to visit the ranch. After hearing the history of the ranch and how they had successfully diversified into the tourism and film industries, the men were astonished. They couldn't understand how you could just change the direction of your company like that. How do you go from being a cattle ranch to being a hub for tourism and movies?

Of course the tour guide didn't understand why the whole thing shocked these businessmen so much. But that is because he, like so many Americans, didn't realize just how uniquely American something as simple as diversification is. In Japan if you own a car industry, you always manufacture and sell cars. If business is slow you give a big pep talk to your sells and manufacturing team to try and pick

up sells. You don't just decide to start selling infant car seats or build an amusement park. But people in America do it every day. Baseball players become car dealers, pharmacists become realtors, paper goods manufacturers add household cleaners to their product line. It's just another day in the life of an American. One day you're a car salesman and the next day you're a nurse.

My son Jordan spent a couple years in Idaho and while there he met a man from Sweden who owned a bakery. Jordan said the man was completely perplexed at how people in America could just become whatever they wanted. "I studied and apprenticed for fifteen years before I could become a baker," the man said. "Here in America people just wake up and say 'I'm going to be a baker today'. And then they do it."

There is a uniqueness about America that has become so commonplace to us, we don't even recognize just how unique we are. I have talked to many immigrants from other countries who have shared their feelings and impressions about America with me. I've heard them say everything from, "there is just no place like it on earth" to "you just don't know how good it is".



Kitty Werthmann, the current president of Eagle Forum in South Dakota, was born in Austria and raised in Austria. She spent seven years of her life under Hitler's rule and five years under Russian Communist rule. In 1950 Kitty came to America. The first thing she saw when the ship came into harbor was the Statue of Liberty—an image she has never forgotten.

Kitty spent her first night in America in a hotel. The next morning she asked the concierge for directions to the nearest police station which he told her was within walking distance. Kitty walked to the police station and told the desk sergeant she wanted to register. The desk sergeant asked what she was talking about. Kitty repeated herself and saying, "I want to register so you will know where I am. How will you find me," she asked, "if I break the law?"

"Don't worry Lady," the sergeant replied, "if you break the law we'll find you, now get out of here!"

Kitty walked outside quite perplexed. She looked up at the clear blue sky and puzzled, "What kind of country is this?" And then she realized. "All of a sudden," she said, "it dawned on me. It's freedom!"

And that is the beauty of America. It is what people come from countries all over the world for. They know that America is the land of opportunity. They know it is a place of peace where they are free. And when they come and experience that freedom for the first time it is something they treasure forever because they know, it isn't just a dream. It's real!