



Name in English: Chinn Ho
Name in Chinese: Not known
Name in Pinyin: Not available
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1904-1987
Birth Place: Honolulu, Hawaii
Philanthropy: Yes

Business Leader and Philanthropist

Profession(s): Entrepreneur, Business Leader, Philanthropist

Education: Correspondence courses, 1925-26, University of Hawaii Extension

Awards:

2007, Special Recognition Award, Asian American Journalists Association; 1986, Inducted into Hall of Honor, McKinley High School; 1983, Honorary Degree Conferred, University of Hawaii; 1983, Inducted into Hawaii Business Hall of Fame, Junior Achievement; 1983, Distinguished Achievement Award, National Association of Chinese Americans; 1974, Citizen of the Year Award in Hawaii

Contribution (s): From his first job selling pencils and can openers door-to-door, Chinn Ho rose to the top as a legendary self-made millionaire who broke racial barriers in Hawaii through his entrepreneurial spirit and astute business acumen. Ho was widely believed to be the inspiration for the fictional character of Hong Kong Kee, a Chinese man that outsmarted the white hierarchy in James Michener's novel "Hawaii."

In 1944, Ho founded the Capital Investment Company with \$200,000. Three years later, he garnered attention through the Hawaiian community when he bought \$1.2 million of stock in the Waianae Sugar Company, the first time an Asian had executed such a large purchase. With a keen nose for business, Ho anticipated the profitability of investing in land. In 1959, he bought the Ilikai, Hawaii's biggest condominium-apartment project, and transformed it to Hawaii's first high-rise luxury resort when it opened in 1964. The building is famously featured in the balcony scene in the opening credits of the TV show Hawaii Five-O. Not so coincidentally one of the fictional detectives in the series was named Chin Ho Kelly.

Ho was involved with an array of land, financial, and commercial businesses in the U.S. and globally. He had land development projects in California and invested and built hotels in Hong Kong and China, becoming an early proponent for normalization of relations between U.S. and China. At a time when whites dominated corporate boardrooms and prestigious clubs, Ho broke racial barriers with his success. He was the first Asian head of the Honolulu Stock Exchange, the first Asian president of a Triple A professional baseball team, the Hawaii Islanders, the first Asian trustee of a landed estate, and the first Asian director of Theo H. Davies & Co., a company of the influential

“Big Five” group of former sugar cane plantations that exercised great political power in Hawaii. After World War II, Ho served as the patron of Daniel K. Inouye, then a young Japanese American soldier who had lost his arm during the war who eventually became a U.S. Senator for Hawaii. In 1961, he purchased the Honolulu Star-Bulletin publication, previously owned solely by whites, becoming the first Asian board chairman and major sole owner of a major Honolulu daily newspaper. As the head of many businesses, Ho used his influence to ensure the staff and board was multiethnic instead of exclusively Caucasian.

Dubbed the “Chinese Rockefeller” or the “Chinese Horatio Alger,” Ho was a symbol of the American Dream and was a successful immigrant who gave back to the community through his philanthropic efforts.

Philanthropy: Ho was a major philanthropist, contributing financially to the Capital Hospital in Beijing and to local projects and charities in Hawaii, such as the restoration of the Hawaiian temple Kaneaki Heiau. Through his Chinn Ho Foundation, Ho funded the Chinn Ho Reading Room at Harvard University’s Yenching Library, and a Chinese cultural center in Marin County, California. Ho himself never graduated from college, but gave funds to help his high school classmate and friend, Hiram Fong, attend Harvard Law School in the 1930s. Fong would later become the first Chinese and Asian American U.S. Senator.

External Links:

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/150/sesq4ho>

<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/05/14/obituaries/chinn-ho-83-a-major-figure-in-success-of-hawaii-s-asians.html>

Kim, Hyung-chan. (1999). *Distinguished Asian Americans*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.