



Grace Buscher Guslander

Whoever named her “Grace” must have foreseen the charms that made Grace Buscher Guslander a leading lady of Hawai’i hospitality. Grace Buscher moved to the islands in the early 1940s from Pennsylvania. Without any hotel experience, she took a job at the Coco Palms hotel on Kaua’i, managed by Lyle “Gus” Guslander, whom she married in 1969. Her natural understanding of hospitality and guest relations set her—and the Coco Palms—apart from the ordinary. Before “sense of place” became a buzzword in the visitor industry, Grace embraced the Hawaiian culture and made it part of the guest experience. In fact, the Coco Palms was an experience for its guests because of Grace’s hospitality and her innovative touches. She was a real presence at the cocktail parties she hosted for her guests around the “Queen’s Bath” swimming pool. And she invented touches like an evening torch lighting ceremony that are now copied at resorts around the islands.

The hotel was host to celebrity guests and, famously, was a setting in the movie Blue Hawai’i. Unfazed by celebrity, Grace created a tradition of having her famous guests plant trees to help replenish the coconut grove on the hotel grounds.

The success of the Coco Palms and the reputation it gained as an unparalleled Hawai’i experience was in large part due to the personality of Grace Buscher Guslander. Grace retired in 1984, but the property continued to benefit from her reputation until it closed in 1992 after Hurricane Iniki.