



Jimmie Healani MacKenzie

Jimmie MacKenzie—the “smilin’ Hawaiian”—started his career in hospitality as the resident manager of the Kaua’i Inn in the late 1940s. In 1949, he struck out on his own, creating the MacKenzie Travel Organization. He launched his business with \$350 that he borrowed from his sister. His business facilities consisted of a party-line telephone in his apartment and an old portable typewriter. Jimmie’s operations grew to compete with Trade-Wind Tours and Island Holidays Tours, offering Hawai’i’s visitors convenient and affordable travel packages. When Jimmie started his business, Hawai’i had 42,000 visitors, but he envisioned a future built on visitor growth and he wanted to profit from it. He made personal sales calls on mainland travel agencies – always carrying a stack of MacKenzie brochures—and his guitar.

Jimmie was one of those legendary tourism figures that exhibited talent in both business and entertainment. One of his musical groups, the Mackenzie Serenaders, was actually an office quartet. The self-styled “Mayor of Waikīki” he promoted Hawai’i with a big smile and a sense of humor.

In 1934 he took his musical program Healani of the South Seas on the road, performing for NBC Radio and at showrooms including the Hotel Lexington in New York City. He also toured with Jimmie MacKenzie and his Tropicaires orchestra at venues around the country in 1941, including an eighteen month run at the Hilton Sky Room in Long Beach.

Jimmie’s formula for selling Hawai’i was to provide visitors with personalized service ... and make Hawaiian entertainment a part of his business model.