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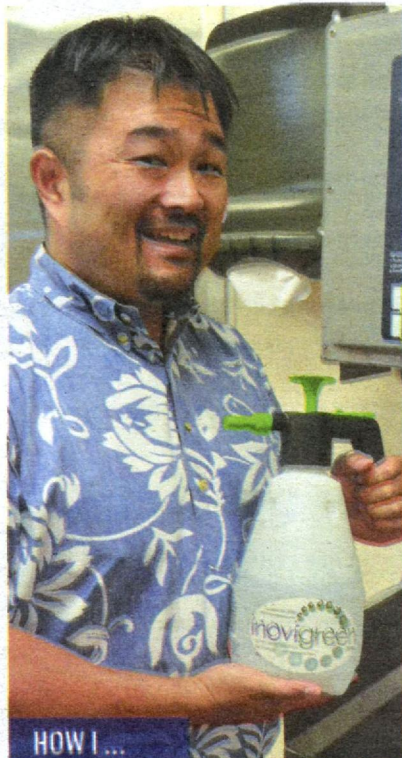
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Honolulu's bicycle-sharing program is asking the public to help pick its bikeshare system.

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The move by China's central bank could impact Hawaii real estate and other business investments as well as tourism and retail.

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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

August 21, 2015
Vol. 53, No. 26 \$2.75

737 Bishop St.
Suite 1590
Honolulu, HI 96813



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SOCIAL CAPITAL

Donald Goo receives rare honor

At a gala Saturday night at the Hawaii Convention Center he helped design, architect Donald Goo, FAIA will receive the rare Medal of Honor award from the American Institute of Architects Hawaii State Council, presented by the Hawaii Architectural Foundation. Only six other Hawaii architects have been so honored since the award was instituted in 1998, including Vladimir Ossipoff, FAIA, and Ernest Hara, FAIA.

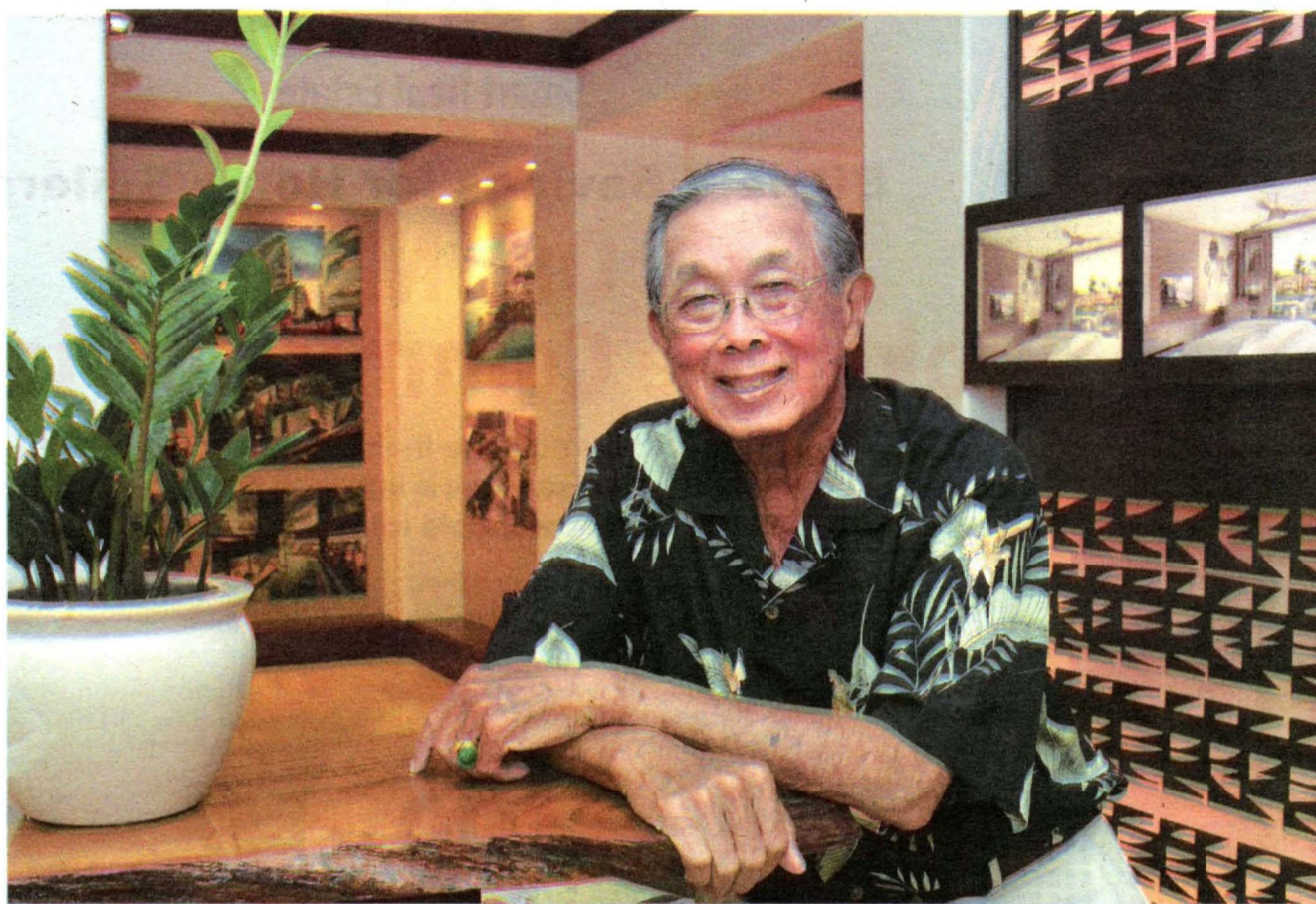
Goo joined what was then known as Wimberly and Cook in 1959 and soon became president of what is now known as WATG – the “G” is his – a Honolulu-based architectural powerhouse which has grown to eight locations around the world (Dubai; Honolulu; Irvine, California; Istanbul; London; Los Angeles; New York; Singapore). The firm made a name for itself for international resorts in the jet age, when the modern hospitality industry was born, and that remains its specialty.

Its prominent projects include the Royal Hawaiian Resort (1946), Hotel Bora Bora (1961), Palace of the Lost City in South Africa (1992), the Venetian in Las Vegas (1999) and the Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi (2005).

PBN Editor in Chief A. Kam Napier met with Goo to discuss his career, starting with, at Goo's suggestion, the subject of luck.

How do you “be lucky”? You just do it one day at a time. I have a quote that I like from Daniel Burnham, “Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood.” You have to think about the big stuff. I think I deal in hypotheses, what could be.

Is that how you were able take a local firm and make it an international firm? It's one day at a time! I'll start with what I think is the beginning. There were five of us, Pete Wimberly, George Whisenand, Jerry Allison, Greg Tong and myself and they said, “Everybody's busy. Don, you be president.” Ok. So I thought about and said well, usually there's a plan so let's get together and talk about what we want to do. I didn't know how to arrange an organization. We talked and the thing that came out of it was, “Go where the action is.” In our line of business that happens to be the world. Our



TINA YUEN

London office happened in 1990 because Greg Tong thought if we don't go now, we won't ever be allowed to get in there because he was thinking about the EU. If we weren't registered there we probably wouldn't be able to do business in that part of the world. Of course, we studied the market, all of the conditions and we finally said, “Go!” We got there—and the market crashed. [Laughs] That's what happened in California, too. We got a job [there], we went to California and the economy crashed. So we were successful two times in a row! [laughs]

When you were studying architecture, did you receive any training in business? No.

So you had to learn on the job? Of course! Architects never do anything easily. They can design but ... learn about business? Nah. We took care of our clients and they took care of us ... and we were really fortunate. We were in at the beginning of the hospitality industry growth in the world. So you know, being lucky is even better than being skillful.

What was the hardest lesson for you on the business side as you evolved into being the CEO? Realizing that I had no pattern to follow. We had grown to about

► CLOSER LOOK

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from 12 persons from when I joined to about 40, 45. And then the recession came and we cut back to 15. Then we grew again to maybe the high 40s and recession came again. I said to myself, “I'll be smart, I'll find out what people do.” I contacted a business publication and said, “Tell me about some people who have been successful.” I got three names of East Coast firms, got on board the airplane, went – and they had no clue about ownership succession. They were successful, but no clue. I came back and said, “Well, I'm just going to have to make it up.” You have to have smart people and they have to be entrepreneurial and not uniform in their thinking.

(PBN and Goo discuss the future of tourism, leading Goo to observe:)

I'm thinking about doing a paper on tourism after 60 years [in the industry]. What do we do with tourism? The state has a marketing

arm, they try to get us customers from all over the world, but that's not necessarily going to be what tourism is all about.

Where do you think it's headed?

I don't know if there's a heading but I think we might steer it. What makes good tourism? A relationship of people. Except that tourism isn't necessarily that strong of a relationship. Some of it feels artificial. How can you make it more realistic? That's perhaps the secret that needs to be discovered, that needs to be implemented, that needs to have a champion that will get everybody else moving in that direction. And it's a big industry. How do you move it? [laughing]

That's probably one of the biggest challenges, the sheer numbers of people who can travel every year.

Exactly! The secret of the next wave of tourism is being able to discover how to reconnect the visitor and the resident in a substantive way. Is it only the hotel worker that gets to offer our hospitality? If you go somewhere and you walk into a coffee shop and you strike up a conversation with someone who is obviously local, it's probably an experience that you'll remember. They'll tell you something and it'll change something and maybe you'll exchange Christmas cards. To me, that's tourism.