

# Old Friends

FRANK DELIMA



Byron Lee photo

So what has comedic legend Frank DeLima been up to since he appeared on *MidWeek*'s cover in July 1985? The same thing he's always been doing: keeping people laughing with live shows, albums and television while visiting 180 schools a year through the Frank Delima Student Enrichment Program.

The program began 25 years ago on Maui when Kahului Elementary School principal Kunio Kobayashi allowed him to talk to the students. Since then he has taken his message of character development, combined with big laughs, to two generations of Hawaii school children.

"I call it the three B's: being safe, being responsible and being respectful," DeLima says, adding that a portion of his visit was suggested by school superintendent Pat Hamamoto. "I also talk about the disease of the adolescent period. I call it tita-itis and blahlah-itis. I make joke, but I tell them seriously that you don't prove yourself as a man by trying to see how many "F" words you can put in a sentence or smoke a cigarette to be macho or how many guys you can beat up. That is not being a man. A man is safe, a man is responsible, a man is respectful. And I say to the girls along the same lines about developing into young women and young ladies, watching your mouth and how to treat your support group: the parents, the teachers, of course the public servants, police and fireman, and their friends. And sometimes we forget who's supporting us and we're mean to them. We answer back, we don't listen to them. Sometimes we're cruelest to the people we love the most."

There was probably no one sadder to see the old Wisteria restaurant shut down than its most famous regular. "I miss it dearly," he says of the family dining spot he first came to as a 5-year-old. "I never ate at home. It was a gathering place for all walks of life." The staff members, who were like family, even helped him lose weight by refusing to serve him junk food even if he asked. DeLima has lost 60 pounds in the last two years. It sounds like the help worked.

So what does the future hold for DeLima? He has a dream. A pretty good one at that. How's this for an idea? You go out for a nice meal and a show. Dozens of costumes line the walls of the establishment and you point to your favorites, the ones you would like to revisit, and at the prescribed time Auntie Mary Tunta, Imelda Marcos, Tita Turner, Sumotori Lolobono and Cardinal Francis X. Vermicelli come to life. That's what Frank wants to do. You chose the character, he provides the laughs. Now all he needs is an investor. Customers shouldn't be a problem. In the meantime you'll just have to settle for his show at Margarita's in Waikiki. He'll be off soon to the mainland, but he will return in December.

—Steve Murray