

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Produced by RESORT ASSOCIATION PARTNERS, LLC

November 2015

for MAUNA LANI RESORT ASSOCIATION

Meet your  
Mauna Lani  
neighbors...

The Mauna Lani community is comprised of diverse individuals from all walks of life. Get to know them a bit better through our new series of **Member Spotlight** articles.



Roy Simperman

***“We humans need a magnetic north. A compass to guide our lives. Everyone needs to find one but too many never do.”***

— Roy Simperman

## Roy F. Simperman The Cape at Mauna Lani & Mauna Lani Point

Roy Simperman is a seeker of truth and knowledge, and a sharer of expertise. An entrepreneur and lifelong supporter of educational access, he started out at Boeing, working on NASA projects. He later founded Semaphore, a Seattle based company that designs, builds and manages audio, voice, and data networks worldwide and for which he remains the CEO, working from an encrypted connection at his Mauna Lani home.

Roy has served for years as a board member, supporter and volunteer at O’Dea High School, an inner city boys’ school in Seattle. A student there once told him, “This is the only place I feel safe.” “That’s sad,” Roy told MLRA, “for a kid to feel so unsafe in his life generally. Kids need to feel safe in order to break the cycle of poverty. At O’Dea we had a philosophy that suggested that if we were to truly succeed at educating our young men, we had to care for them physically and spiritually as well as mentally. I sincerely believe that this concept goes way beyond education. It is very much a holistic philosophy. I do believe that it applies to all of human kind.”

Simperman’s commitment to educating young people of limited means has its origins in his own childhood in a Butte, Montana copper mining camp. His father managed a large lumberyard, and his mother ran a successful green stamps redemption center. Never having finished high school themselves, they encouraged Roy to apply himself academically.

Roy’s teachers, recognizing his sharp, inquisitive mind, challenged him with puzzles and tests, which earned him exemption from classwork. While most of his classmates attended technical college, Roy had high aspirations; at twelve, he told his mother he wanted to be a nuclear physicist.

Simperman paid his way through Carroll College, graduating nearly debt-free by working as a truck driver in the summers and a rock and jazz musician on weekends. He majored in math and minored in physics, history, English and philosophy, completing five years of work in just four years and graduating *cum laude*.

Recognizing there was nothing for him in the mining camp and that his possibilities were limited with only a bachelor’s degree, he went on for a Master’s in Physics at the University of Nebraska, where he received a teaching assistantship that came with free tuition, a stipend, and bookstore discounts that allowed him to graduate debt-free.

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In 1965, Roy married Diane Corette. From one of the 50 most influential families in the state of Montana, her affluent and prominent background clashed with Roy's working class heritage, but love won out. The couple moved to Seattle, where Simperman went to work for Boeing, coding and calculating trajectories for NASA lunar orbiter computer simulations, creating software for NASA mission navigation and guidance control, and working on a fusing system for a nuclear warhead in a missile. Realizing he needed another degree, Simperman enrolled part-time in the highly competitive MBA program at University of Washington, earning an MBA in finance and economics.

Simperman next brought his expertise to bear in a thirteen-year career at Weyerhaeuser Timber, where he designed and developed a computer simulation to model the forestry program from genetics to timber harvest, making the company more profitable. In 1985, he purchased Audio Control, a manufacturer of equalizers and signal processors for audiophiles. He also bought a stock photography company which sold photos online before the Internet was widely known. Simperman's work at the stock photo company led to the creation of Semaphore in 1994.

Having achieved his own goals, and recognizing the importance of education in creating a rewarding and impactful life, Simperman has dedicated time and funding to helping others achieve their educational goals. In addition to his work at O'Dea, he has served as family manager for the Elsie Pauly Corette Scholarship fund at Carroll College, started by his father-in-law, Jack Corette, providing aid to over 120 students pursuing careers in medicine. In 2009, he created the Simperman Math and Science Scholarships at the college, later expanded to include nursing. In six years, 34 students have received \$415,500 in scholarships, with each 2015 recipient granted over \$11,000.

Roy and Diane started visiting the Big Island in the 70s, staying at Kona Village Resort. When they were ready to buy a place of their own, they searched the Kona and Kohala Coasts before settling on Mauna Lani, where Simperman was drawn to the resort's commitment to sustainability and the open spaces that reminded him of Montana.

The couple bought an ocean view condo at Mauna Lani Point in 1995. Two years later, having begun designing their dream home, they bought a single family house lot, at the Cape. Sadly, Diane passed away in 2000, before it was built.

The Cape lot remained vacant for six years, during which time Roy continued working on design plans the couple had started. In 2001, he began dating Frances Rogers, owner of a successful printing business in Seattle; she jumped on board as Roy's co-designer, and they broke ground on the lot at the Cape in 2003. Looking back and laughing, Frances says, "Roy and I designed the house together as we were dating, so it served as a test of our relationship." The couple married in 2004, and they completed the house in 2006.



Roy and Frances Simperman in their home at The Cape

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The home blends Polynesian elements with Mediterranean influences. In the entry courtyard, Polynesian landscaping blends with Mediterranean corbels and Egyptian columns. The Simpermans chose to use Port Orford cedar, African mahogany, and koa throughout the 10,000 square-foot house. For maximum privacy, the bedrooms are not directly accessible from any other rooms. The rear *lanai* features a 25-foot lap pool and a small triangular kiddie pool for the couple's grandkids. Four enormous Egyptian-style columns and a 100+ foot I-Beam support the *lanai* ceiling.

The home's most significant décor feature is the extensive collection of local artworks, most notably the large turned urns in cook pine by Elmer Adams, wood sculptures by Greg Pontius and paintings by James Hutchison and Herb Kane.

Roy and Frances split their time between Mauna Lani and their home on Mercer Island in Seattle. While continuing to operate Semaphore, Roy has served as a director and vice president on the MLRA board, as a member of the resort-wide Community Design Committee, and as treasurer and president of the Mauna Lani Point board; he is currently president of the Cape board of directors. Frances serves on the board of nearby Parker School, whose roots as a school for the children of Parker Ranch *paniolo* speak to Roy's own roots.

While he remains a steadfast supporter of education, Simperman points to personal traits as perhaps most significant to an individual's success. When interviewing job applicants at Weyerhaeuser, he sometimes was asked what it took to succeed there. His reply: "Probably nothing that you learned in college or university: Integrity, common sense and good judgment.' Most of these young grads really didn't know how to deal with that." Asked to share his guiding philosophy, Simperman told MLRA, "We humans need a magnetic north. A compass to guide our lives. Everyone needs to find one but too many never do."

— By Gillian Culff



Sunset from the Simperman residence at The Cape at Mauna Lani

Gillian Culff is a writer, editor and creative writing teacher who has lived in North Hawaii for over twenty years. You can find her on Facebook and Twitter as well as her website: [www.gillianculff.com](http://www.gillianculff.com)