

## Rocker In The Free World

No. 1 in Big Island residential sales for 2007, this gregarious Hawaiian broker is a free spirit.

**R**ic Rocker is not your typical real estate broker. Having dropped out of the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1960s to embark on a Siddhartha-like search for enlightenment, he arrived in Hawaii in 1968 with a one-way ticket and \$13 in his pocket. He seems an unlikely candidate to be the leading sales agent on the Big Island twice this decade, not to mention representing the seller on the highest-priced home ever sold in the state, but in his 40-year trip from broke to brokerage he somehow discovered a balance between making dollars and making sense.

"I seem to have a knack for it," says Rocker, the 59-year-old owner of Richard B. Rocker, Realtor, who likes to be known as Uncle Ricky and prefers a sarong to pants. "I ask my clients a lot of questions. I always say that until I know where you want to go, it is hard for me to get you there. Eventually, we get to a place where I'm able to make recommendations that may not have previously been considered."

"I am a research analyst at heart and a contrarian by nature. I look for long-term quality being temporarily overlooked due to short-term circumstances. I don't chant the mantra 'it's always a good time to buy,' which sometimes translates into recommending clients not to buy. I am looking to create relationships not deals. Once real trust is established, business will come at the appropriate time."

As could be expected of someone who has lived off the land, Rocker is not thrilled about development; however, he has worked on and sold multi-unit luxury projects. This might seem contradictory, but Rocker considers the impact on the island before choosing to work on such projects.

"I have to be able to drive by a project with my daughter

and her friends in the car and be able to say, 'I did that,' or I don't want to be involved," Rocker says. "I've tried to make sure sensitive properties end up in the hands of people who understand their significance; I feel that more important than the buyer, seller or myself, is the a'ina (land). Essentially, I try to take my clients' hands and put them on the face of Mother Nature and once in a while I get lucky. For better or worse I play this game very differently than most brokers."

The word "play" is foremost in Rocker's mind, even when dealing with what he labels "über-wealthy" clients that might not expect his marketing techniques or candor. "I tell potential clients if they want to have fun working with someone who knows the market inside out, we have the basis for a relationship," Rocker says. "It's such a simple concept and I can sleep at night."

Maybe it's because Rocker is known to cook meals for his clients, deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to them from his farm, and delight them with his own mango jam. "I really like my clients—a lot," Rocker says. "Many have become my dearest friends. I learn so much from them. They're very special people and I feel privileged to be able to meet such uniquely intelligent, creative and powerful individuals."

Rocker's unconventional style, after all is said and done, does produce a typical result among that group.

"Whenever they're on island," Rocker says with a smile, "they come see Uncle Ricky." **UH**

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— Richard B. Rocker, Realtor

