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Kaua'i activist arrested by FBI

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LIHUE, Kaua'i — Gary J. Baldwin, a leading figure in marketing the Islands to tourists and industry, was taken into custody yesterday morning by the FBI, which says he is wanted for fraud in Arizona.

Baldwin, who was arrested at his Kalihiwai home, is charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. The FBI said he is wanted in Arizona on felony counts of theft and fraud dating back to a 1986 indictment.

Baldwin has led a high-profile political life in Hawai'i. He has served on major state and county boards, helped direct the course of the state's major industry and is a fixture in the corridors of power at the state Capitol and in Washington, D.C.

"I have known Gary Baldwin for several years, and I have known him to be a good, contributing citizen of Kaua'i. He has worked diligently for the economic development of the island. I was stunned by the allegations," said Sen. Dan Inouye.

"Gary Baldwin was a pretty good public citizen in Hawaii, and served the people of Kaua'i and our state well on the HTA. This latest news comes as quite a shock," Gov. Ben Cayetano said.

Kaua'i Mayor Maryanne Kusaka said she had known Baldwin since he was an agent at Thrifty Car Rental more than a dozen years ago. She later appointed Baldwin to the Kaua'i Planning Commission.

"I'm just shocked," she said. "I've always known him to be an advocate for tourism."

Baldwin was in the custody of Honolulu police yesterday afternoon and could not be reached for comment. People on Kaua'i who know him were shocked, and some questioned whether Kaua'i's Baldwin is associated with the Arizona case.

"I thought to myself, 'Did they get the right guy?'" said Margy Parker, director of the Po'ipu Beach Resort Association.

There are several inconsistencies in the case. The FBI lists Baldwin as 53, but he has listed a birth date that makes him 54. Several residents also say they seem to remember him being on the island before the Arizona thefts occurred, and Baldwin himself reports that he arrived in 1982.

FBI agent Susan Herskovits in Phoenix said Baldwin was indicted Sept. 24, 1986, on four counts of felony theft and one count of another felony called "fraud schemes and artifices." She said Baldwin was a consultant to the offices of Arizona eye doctor David Dulaney for several months, during which time \$300,000 disappeared. Baldwin was accused of having taken the money. Shortly after being informed of his indictment, Baldwin disappeared, leaving behind a suicide note.

Nicole Pena, spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, could not explain why it has taken 15 years for authorities to find a man who did not appear to be hiding. She said



Gary Baldwin was a dedicated booster of the state and Kaua'i. Photo courtesy News 8

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Baldwin appeared to have been using the same name he had in Arizona. She said one of the victims of the theft located Baldwin and reported it to Arizona authorities, who in turn contacted the FBI last month.

Extradition to Arizona

The FBI filed a charge of unlawful flight to avoid prosecution, and used that charge to make an arrest about 9:30 a.m. yesterday at Baldwin's north shore home, with the assistance of Kaua'i police. FBI agent Kevin Rickett said Baldwin "is not going to proceed through the federal system," and would instead be extradited to Arizona to face the local charges there.

In Hawai'i, Baldwin is know as an intelligent, aggressive advocate for the state's economy, and Kaua'i's economy in particular. He is a former chairman of the Kaua'i Planning Commission, and former president of the Kaua'i Economic Development Board. He was a charter director of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority, where he served as chairman of the strategic planning and accountability committee until his term ended this year.

"He's a very bright guy, a big contributor to the HTA," said Rick Humphreys, executive director of the Hawai'i Tourism Authority. "He was always available. I would say he played a significant role."

Details on life sketchy

During the past 15 years on Kaua'i, he was general manager of the Thrifty Car Rental franchise and later owned a National Car Rental franchise, a Baskin-Robbins ice cream shop and a wholesale bakery known as Da Crusty Gecko. He told reporters he sold the National franchise. The other businesses have closed.

He won the 1997 Small Business Administration's award as the Kaua'i small business person of the year. In the same year, Inside Kaua'i magazine named him one of the island's two most influential people. He won the Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce aloha spirit award in 1993. He recently has marketed himself as a management consultant and has focused on development of a second phase of the West Kaua'i Technology and Visitor Center in Waimea, which has him listed as managing director.

Details of his life before his arrival on Kaua'i are sketchy. He told a reporter for Inside Kaua'i that he was from St. Louis, Mo., and that he had worked in the aluminum industry.



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