

Hawaii Trip 2008:

Our group of six left Detroit, MI for our 4 island tour vacation. The group consisted of Jerry & Sue, Mike & Audrey and Ray and Cathy Lambert.

Our first stop was the island of Maui. We landed in Maui and went to the rental to get our van. We managed to cram in all our luggage and ourselves. Jerry drove us to our first stop, Iao Valley State Park. A short hike took us to view the Iao Needle, a 1,200 ft./366-m-tall green monolith. Locals were swimming in the stream that ran through the park.

We continued on our way to McGregor Point to a scenic lookout and a lighthouse beacon. We arrived at our accommodations for the next few days at Kapalua Villas after a brief stop to buy some beer, Maui chips and some other items. Our condo at Kapalua Villas overlooked a pristine golf course designed in part by golf greats Arnold Palmer and Ben Crenshaw. Plenty of friendly birds shared our breakfast in the morning on the one of two outdoor patios. The next day we drove all over the island and did some hiking across lava beds to view the Nakalele blowhole and Olivine pools. We got our fill of the many many curves on the way to locating some waterfalls on Hana Hwy. Ray made a dash for Haleakala National Park to view the largest volcano in the world rising 30,000 ft/9,150 m from the ocean floor. Our ascent up the mountain brought us to cloud level and the air was cool and fresh. We saw an unusual plant called the Haleakala silversword plant, endemic to the Haleakala volcano crater area above 6800 foot elevation.

The next day Mike and I went snorkeling near our condo at Kapalua. Cathy went to lay on the beach and Ray, Sue and Jerry went shopping in Lahaina. We all had dinner in a seafood restaurant in Lahaina the night before and watched as a beautiful sunset took place. When Mike and I finished snorkeling we went to the Ritz Hotel to look up Cathy and had a nice lunch overlooking the beach. We stayed a while longer and took up residence by the Ritz pool with Jerry and Ray arriving shortly after. We had to get ready for the Old Lanaina Luau and celebrate Jerry and Sue's 30th wedding anniversary. The luau was located by the oceans edge with palm trees swaying in the breeze. The dancers came on stage dressed in native attire and performed many different dances with the beat of a Hawaiian band.

We left the next day for the big island of Hawaii to drive to Volcano House located in Volcanoes National Park. We had two cars on this island and a little more room for the luggage. After arriving in Volcanoes National Park we took off following one another to several viewing areas in the park. We went to see the steam vents, Kilauea overlook, Halema'uma'u crater, devils throat and Thurston lava tube. I liked the lava tube as it was so big you could walk through it. Jerry had found out from the rangers in the visitor's center just where to go and view the active lava flow outside the Volcanoes National Park. After an early dinner of some great wood fired pizza Jerry drove us to the location of the lava flow. You view it at night after walking across a lava field to get to the ocean's edge. It was flowing alright and the hot lava was flowing right into the ocean

with sparks flying and putting on an amazing fireworks show for the crowd that had bravely walked to the viewing area.

The next day Jerry and Sue continued to circle the island in the car to view some waterfalls and beaches with resting green sea turtles. Mike, Cathy, Ray and I drove to Kona to go kayaking and snorkeling at a cove by Capt. Cook's monument. Spinner dolphins are sometimes swimming in the bay by Capt. Cook's monument but we did not see any the day we went. We all loaded up in our kayaks and made our way to Capt. Cook's monument with our guide from Texas telling us his life story and stories about the area. He showed us several holes in the cliffs where Hawaiian chiefs were buried. The story goes that slaves were lowered down on ropes to put the bones of the chiefs in secret places that no one else knew of and after they put the bones in place the ropes were cut and the slave went to his death with the secret place still visible in his mind. The snorkeling at Capt. Cook's monument, the place where Cook met his death, was pristine snorkeling at its best. The water was clear and many different kinds of fish were swimming among the colorful coral. A natural spring was in the area and you could feel the cold rush of water in certain areas. On the shore you could see the Queen's bath where the Queen of the community would take her private bath. After we got the kayaks back to the shop we stopped for some coffee and ice cream and raced back to Volcanoes National Park to view the Pu'u Loa Petroglyphs. It was a nice walk to get to the petroglyphs and we made it just in time before sunset to get back to our car. On the way back we watched as a group of Nene (Hawaiian geese) fly in a V over our car.

The next day it was getting packed and heading out for the airport to fly to Kauai. We got a better van this time and headed off to the Hilton Kauai Beach Resort. As soon as we could unload the van we drove to town to catch our helicopter flight. Ray and Cathy were in the front with the pilot and Mike, Sue and I were in the back. The pilot was amusing and very informative about the area we flew over. The island had many mountain peaks covered with foliage and so many waterfalls you could not count them all. A lot of the land was owned by a single family called the Robinsons. In total, the Robinson family controls over 45000 acres of land on Kauai and Niihau. The pilot showed us the areas used as location for many Hollywood movies. More than six dozen movies or TV projects have been filmed on the island over the past 70 years, and many of the locations are readily accessible to the film-buff visitor. South Pacific, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Donovan's Reef, Pagan Love Song, Blue Hawaii, remake of King Kong and The Wackiest Ship in the Army, just to mention a few.

I thought the next day on Kauai was my favorite. We got up early to drive to the docks and got aboard a Capt. Andy's Na Pali Coast zodiac raft tour. This boat can really go fast!!! We headed into some rain and became so engrossed when a full double rainbow appeared, we soon forgot about the rain. As we continued to Na Pali coast a group of spinner dolphins gave us a show. We arrived at Na Pali and its cliffs and lava caves. The Capt. of our raft took us right inside some of the lava caves. We made a few pit stops to relieve mother nature and then we stopped for a great sandwich lunch. I passed on the lunch as I was a bit shaken by the bouncing of the waves we endured in our travels. I was sitting on the front edge of the raft and afterwards headed for the back with a steady

cushy seat awaiting my recovery. We did a short snorkel and the Capt. started taking us back to the docks. We suddenly had to stop as the military base was going to launch some missiles. The Capt. took us back to a calm cove to wait till we had clearance to go back to the docks. We watched as two missiles were fired from the military base. All clear!!! On our way back I wrapped myself in my beach towels and avoided the sun's rays. The Capt. spotted some sea turtles and he stopped so that we could get a good look at them. After the raft ride we were all ready for a nice afternoon at the resort. I should never have laid my weary head on the soft fluffy pillows on my bed as I didn't want to get up. Mike got us a covered seat arrangement on the beach and so I gathered my stuff to lay by the pool. I liked watching the children at the pool and some begging birds would stop by. We were having a good time when the landlord of the cushions kicked us out of our lounging luxury.

Anything missed? You bet... but it is on to the airport to catch our flight to Waikiki on Oahu. We stayed at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani a stones throw from Waikiki beach. It has been 35 years since I had last visited this island when my brother Ronald lived on Oahu. The downtown area was wall to wall hotels, stores and restaurants. You could see people walking down the streets with surf boards, beach bags and beach toys heading to Waikiki. On every corner a street entertainer was trying to get your attention to watch his act. We girls did some quick shopping in and out of stores while the guys found a man bench to sit on. Mike and I got this great idea to see a show that we thought was a "Cirque du Soleil" act. After purchasing 6 tickets and getting to the show I told Mike that I didn't think it as a "Cirque du Soleil" act even though the name and costume were similar. As soon as the show started Mike was convinced I was right. We all left and got our money back the next day...nothing gained nothing lost. Took a moonlight walk on the beach and left our footprints in the sand.

Sue, Jerry, Cathy and Ray took off for the Polynesian Cultural Center the next day and Mike and I took a local bus to China town. I love to visit markets when ever I can. China town was an experience. One part had a food court but very different than a food court at our shopping malls. I ventured to try a coconut bun and Mike had the spam, rice and seaweed sandwich. We walked around to the fish market with live fish for sale. The fruit and vegetable market, meat market with pork, chicken and frogs for sale. I felt sorry for the caged frogs and almost purchased them so I could let them go free. We walked to a temple that I was hoping to go into but it was closed. I spotted a friendly restaurant called Zippy's and convinced Mike to go inside. I had a fish sandwich...Mike was holding out for Chinese food. We went back to the restaurants in China town but dim sum was over and dinner was not till 5:00 so we went back to the bus stop and headed back towards our hotel. I showed Mike a Tai restaurant and we got off the bus and waited 15 minutes till it opened and he had a Tai dinner.

Last night to walk the streets and get some drinks. Mike got some beer at the ABC store and we went to Jerry and Sue's room to have a drink. On their balcony with a great view of the streets and Waikiki beach, Sue made a toast, "You can pick your nose, you can pick your friends, but you can't pick your family, I love ya all and am glad you came to Hawaii with Jerry and I to celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary."

The next day was Jerry, Sue, Cathy and Ray's last day. We all jumped on the early morning bus tour that took us to Pearl Harbor. After an introductory film about when Pearl Harbor was attacked on the 7th of December 1941 we were led to the dock where a boat took us to the Arizona memorial. The memorial was built directly on top of the sunken USS Arizona where the final resting place for many of the battleship's 1177 crew members lost their lives. After arriving back at the Arizona visitor's center our very informative guide drove us to the USS Missouri, "Mighty Mo". We toured several decks and our last stop was on deck where the Japanese surrender ceremony took place on the 2nd of September 1945.

Arrived back at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani and Cathy was waiting with our luggage, she had opted to lay on the beach and get a cheeseburger that day. The airport shuttle arrived minutes later and Jerry, Sue, Cathy and Ray gave Mike and I hugs and waved goodbye to go back to Michigan.

Mike and I stayed 3 more days to rest up before going home. Mike got our rental car and picked me and our luggage up at the Sheraton and off we headed for the Turtle Bay Resort on the northern tip of Oahu. We stopped at Ala Moana Center - World's largest open-air shopping center. I found a great open aired restaurant with big cushioned couches to sit in and we ordered tons of lunch. After we left I told Mike I wanted to stop at Leonard's Bakery on Kapahulu Avenue and pick up a ½ dozen of Portuguese Malasadas. Great donuts, a cross between a Polish Paczki and a Crispy Cream. I cramped them in Mike mouth as he complained about the heavy traffic.

That night we watched a rainbow sunset as we slipped a Mai Tai. I wish we would of went right back to our room but we opted for a moonlight stroll on the paved path around the resort. We came to some steps that lead to the resort's beach. I had just taken a few steps from the steps and I found a hole to fall into and twisted my ankle. I fell in the sand in terrible pain. My first thought was that I had broken my ankle, the same one I broke on vacation in the San Juan Islands off Seattle, WA. Mike thought so too as he had heard the cracking noise my ankle made as I fell. We went to the local clinic the next day and the doc said it was not broken but badly twisted.

We didn't want this to interrupt our last few days of touring. I suggested we go to the beach where the turtles come to shore and I would ice my ankle and rest. We watched as some green sea turtle swam very near the waters edge....one big one came up on the beach to go to sleep. Next stop was Byodo-In Temple located in the Valley of the Temples. This authentically re-created Japanese temple contains gardens, pebbled pathways, a giant gong and a two-ton bronze statue of Buddha nestled at the base of the picturesque and rugged Loolau mountain range on Oahu's windward side. We then left and arrived just in time to catch a garden tour at Senator Fong's Plantation & Gardens. A lady with one other customer said that we could go on the tour...we were lucky as we were supposed to made advanced reservations for this tour. She drove us around the estate and stopped to explain all the plants, flowers, trees, ferns and birds that we saw.

On the way back we stopped at one of the local shrimp trucks and had a wonderful shrimp dinner.

This was our last night so we camped out by the resort pool and watched another beautiful sunset and had dinner at the resort. Just my luck....I had ordered chicken strips and fries. My last morsel was on my plate....I had my paper lined basket too close to the edge of the table because my ankle was hurting so bad that I had pulled up a chair to elevate it on. I put my fork into the last chicken piece and the basket flipped over and all the contents landed in my lap. The waitress had given me lots of BBQ sauce and Ranch dressing. I wanted the Ranch dressing and ate it all....but the BBQ sauce was full and flew all over me with fries hanging on to my chest and clean clothes that I meant to wear home on the plane. Mike gave me his napkins to clean up. I left for my room covered with sauce and food. We cleaned my clothes in the sink as best as possible.

We left the hotel and stopped at the turtle beach and the big guy was just coming up to the shore and we got a good last look at him.

The flight home was uneventful and seemed pretty fast getting home. I got a sympathy vote at the airport and got to ride in a wheelchair a couple of times.

Good to be home!!!