

Hawaii

from front page

in their hair. Upon arrival, we were greeted with fresh flower leis and live Hawaiian music. Corny? Maybe. I doubt I would be so thrilled with all that now, but wouldn't it be nice for the young people to have it that special? Or are they already jaded? I hope not. Now there is not so much as a peanut unless you pay. Upon arrival at Oahu, you could just as well be at Hoboken scurrying to the Hertz van for the five-mile haul to find your rental car, only to get totally lost in traffic on the way to your destination--albeit the latest greatest resort ever.

Actually on our first trip to Hawaii, when we were scarcely more than newlyweds, we flew space available out of Travis Air Force Base. John was a lieutenant at the Presidio. My sorority sister had married into Hawaiian aristocracy and threw a gala event in our honor. When John mused that he'd sure like to have a house there, one of her prominent young guests said, "Well just use your trust fund." I didn't even know what that was. After a glamorous time, feeling like imposters, we flew back, space available from Hickam Air Force Base.

A few years later, still taken for honeymooners, we were able to enjoy the lush Hana Maui. One year John held a business meeting at the dramatic Kona Surf. And we thought we were pretty chic, rubbing elbows with Eva Gabor at the Kahala Hilton. Napili Kai on Maui was one of our favorite family vacations with our kids. During the years I owned my travel agency, if we didn't travel clear across an ocean and ride an elephant to the hotel, I didn't think it counted. Yet I didn't turn down a discount at the Mauna Kea or the Kona Village.

Now it seems we've come full circle. We don't fly space available, but it's not much better. And with the downturn in the economy, we are happy to go at all, using our modest timeshare on Kauai. On this trip, thanks to the generosity of our good friends, we enjoyed the use of their spacious condo and magnificent view at the Keahou Surf and Raquet Club near Kona. It had been years since we had been on the Big Island. I had forgotten that it is not only the biggest but also the newest island, about one million years, and is still largely covered by lava. But plants love it, so at destinations where they are planted, one can enjoy the fragrance of plumeria and the brilliant bougainvillea.

With a bit of the travel agent still in me, we drove back north of the airport to stop at each of the new or recently re-spiffed up luxury hotels: The Marriott, Kona Village, Hilton Wiakoloa Village, Prince, Fairmont (formerly Ritz Carlton) Four Seasons, and my favorites, the Mauna Kea and Mauna Lani. One was more luxurious than the next, though some not so Hawaiian could be anywhere. With the current economy, occupancy was startlingly low. You could probably get a reduced rate on a lovely room. But be

prepared. A mere hamburger at lunch at the Four Seasons was \$25. We were grateful to have our friend's condo.

Missing a bit of the "old Hawaii," it was a treat to go on the Body Glove boat's inaugural three-hour historical cruise from Kona to Kealahou Bay where Captain Cook died at the hands of King Kamehameha I. Pitching this cruise to those who might enjoy a little culture as much as more snorkeling, we sipped Mai Tais and listened to the charming speaker casually talk about the Hawaii we do not want forgotten.

The Hawaiian Islands, he said, were the last lands to be inhabited. Not until 300-700 AD did a few folks from the Marquesas find them, followed by the Polynesians from Tahiti around 1400-1500. It was they who brought sugarcane, coconut, breadfruit, tumeric and hibiscus. When Captain Cook stumbled upon Kauai in 1778, his crew brought smallpox and venereal disease. Still they thought him a god. That was until it did or did not rain at the right time, and they grew skeptical. He met his demise with King Kamehameha I, who went on to unify all the islands. The king was a feisty guy who vigorously enforced taboos, known as Kapus. Eating in the company of women, looking royalty in the eye or standing in their shadow, or for women, eating bananas, were all punishable by death. Is it any wonder that a conch shell was blown to warn commoners of the arrival of royalty so they could get the heck away?

His son King Kamehameha II, at the urging of his wife, was seen publicly eating with her, a statement that the Kapus were abolished. The first constitution of the kingdom was written in 1840. By 1848, commoners and Haoles could buy land, which was probably the beginning of the end of the Hawaiian reign. In 1893, Queen Lioukalani surrendered the islands to the United States. The islands were annexed in 1898, and finally made a state in 1959. Sugarcane and pineapple were introduced in the late 19th Century and became the largest exports until recently when labor costs have made other areas of the world more viable for growing. Now it is tourism. Visitors first came by ship to the earliest luxury hotels--the Ala Mona built in 1901, the Halekulani in 1917 and the Royal Hawaiian in 1927. Thankfully, all have been beautifully restored. The real tourism boom began with the first jet service in 1959.

Our next trip to Hawaii will be to celebrate our anniversary with our son and daughter and their families, plus five grandkids. How time passes. We'll share condos at the Keahou Surf and Raquet Club, collaborate on meal planning, plan an excursion to the Volcano National park, and have a wonderful time. I still remember flying space available as if it were yesterday. It's fun no matter how you do it.

Karen Russo can be reached at kkrusso@aol.com. •

Dear Carol

Dear Carol,

I have been sick for a long time. My friends have been a great support to me and my family. They take me to doctors' appointments, bring food, send good wishes and have really made this whole experience so much better than it could have been. I'm still not well but, while I can, I want to do something to thank them. We don't have a lot of money and I don't have a lot of energy to throw a thank you party. How can I show my friends how much I appreciate their support?

Grateful Grace

Dear Grace,

Your friends don't need a party; they understand your situation and are helping you out of love and appreciation for who you are. You have probably done much to help others in the past. If you can, write a personal note of gratitude to each person, ask a family member for help if writing is a strain for you. Tell each one specifically what they did that you appreciate and name some special qualities they may have like a warm smile, gentle way, or sense of humor. A personal note of appreciation is a treasure that may be cherished long after the memory of a party would have faded.

Dear Carol,

I am so upset. Our credit card company raised our interest rate 50% and they lowered our credit limit. We have never been late on a payment and always pay at least the

minimum. It is just not fair, we've followed their rules for years and now they treat us like we are debtors. How can I get back at them for treating us this way?

Credit Cruncher

Dear Credit Cruncher,

The best way to get back at the company is to pay off your balance. If the balance due is paid each month you will not have to pay any interest at all. You don't want to be treated like a debtor but that is what you are. You bought things you could not pay for, the money was borrowed from the credit card company and now you are paying the company for covering your debts. Get back at them by not using that credit card or any card until there is no longer any balance due. Put the cards away in a safe place. Use them only in an emergency, like getting the car fixed so you can get to work. Pay cash for everything, keep the receipts for a month and see where you have spent your money. You may be surprised at the unnecessary items you have bought. Make a commitment to pay as much over the minimum you can each month and enjoy the sight of your outstanding balance going down. Eventually you will be debt free and no longer at the mercy of those who make and change the rules. You will be in control.

Send questions to askcarolnow@gmail.com. Carol is a Life Coach available for private consultation in person or on the phone. •

Earthtalk

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responsible for more human deaths than warm temperatures and heat waves. "The elderly die in inadequately heated homes. People get skull fractures from falls on the ice. Men die of heart attacks while shoveling snow. People get colds, flu, pneumonia and other respiratory diseases. Infectious diseases proliferate. Hospital admissions rise." Singer, founder of the Science and Environmental Policy Project, concludes that since global warming would raise maximum summer temperatures modestly while raising winter minimum temperatures significantly, it "should help reduce human death rates."

A team of Harvard researchers found otherwise. Their July 2007 study, published in the peer-reviewed *Occupational and Environment Medicine*, found that global warming is likely to cause more deaths in summer because of higher temperatures, but not fewer deaths in milder winters. In analyzing weather data related to the deaths of 6.5 million people in 50 American cities between 1989 and 2000, the researchers found that during two-day cold snaps there was a 1.59 percent increase in deaths because of the extreme temperatures. But in similar periods of extremely hot weather, mortality rates increased 5.74 percent.

Contacts: WHO, www.who.int ; Science and Environmental Policy Project, www.sepp.org.

Send your environmental questions to: EarthTalk, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; earthtalk@emagazine.com. Read past columns at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/archives.php. EarthTalk is now a book! Details and order information at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalkbook. •

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