

2015 Maui Vacation

From December 8th through December 18th we enjoyed a great vacation on the island of Maui in the Hawaiian Islands.

Marie Tinka planned this as a surprise to celebrate Kal's 70th birthday and she asked Marcia and I to join them. Our original flight plans had both couples meeting at the Dallas Airport for a direct flight to Maui. We discussed surprising Kal at the Dallas airport with our presence. However American Airlines changed the Elving's flight plans due cancelled flight out of Pittsburgh. Marcia and I would now fly from Dallas to Honolulu and then on to Maui arriving several hours after the Tinkas.

On December 1st Marie told Kal about the surprise so that he would have time to pack, plan and avoid any conflicts with events he was trying to schedule in Dayton. Marie reported that Kal asked "Wouldn't the Elvings like to come along" and she replied 'Who wouldn't want to go to Maui'. Kal kept asking "are you sure the Elvings aren't coming along" and she finally told Kal that we were! This was probably good as we were able to help the Tinkas with at least a little bit of the planning.

On December 8th Marie and Kal's direct flight from Dallas to Maui was scheduled to arrive in Maui early in the afternoon. The plan was for them to pick up the rental car, check in at the hotel and then pick us up at the airport around 6 PM. Unfortunately there was a "medical emergency" on their flight as it was over the ocean. Their plane had to turn around and land in Los Angeles to deplane the sick passenger. So, after landing hours late in Maui they waited and picked us up at 6 PM.

We arrived at the Sheraton Resort mid-evening and checked in. We were all tired after the long flights but Gabe, the young fellow working the desk, made us feel most welcomed. We had reserved two "Ocean View" rooms. Although Gabe said the hotel was "sold out" he upgraded us for free to two "Deluxe Ocean Front" rooms, waived the \$20/day parking fee and gave us excellent free internet in our rooms. We found out later that these rooms have the very best views and are the largest of the Sheraton's rooms before the larger suites. The big rooms were great. It was very dark outside so it was not until the next morning that we first experienced the great views off of our large balconies.



We loved the views from our balconies. With nothing in front of us but a small lawn and the ocean it was like we were in a private house above the beach. I even saw whales one day in front of our unit. The picture at the left is one I took of our room (fourth floor) while snorkeling off the nearby beach.



We had fun on our first morning exploring the immaculate grounds of the 500+ room resort.



Although the Sheraton has three nice tennis courts they have no organized tennis activities. They directed me to a nearby tennis club that they have an agreement with, the eleven court Grand Lahaina Tennis Club just a nice fifteen minute walk down the beach. What nice folks there! Every morning (except when the four of us had an early morning event planned) the tennis club would arrange either a men's doubles or mixed doubles match for me, always with players of comparable skills, made up of



local resident club members and visitors like me. All for a charge of \$10 per match with the fourth match free!

During my morning tennis matches Marie and Kal, sometimes with Marcia, would be off on long walks and finding a nice place to have breakfast.

Now Marie and Kal (especially Kal with his four tour guide books and internet research) had studied up on all of the attractions to see on Maui and had great sightseeing trips to suggest for us to do every day. On our first day they had

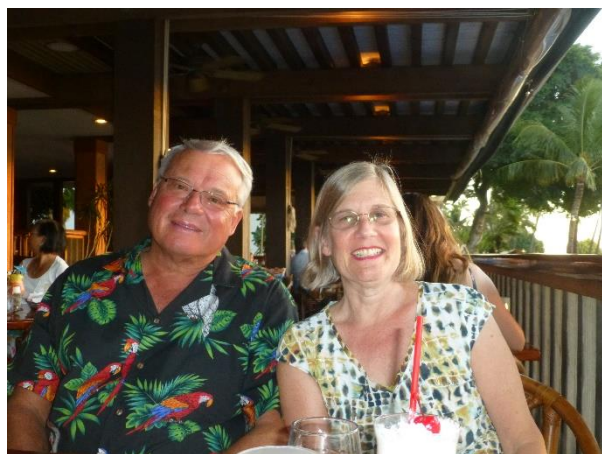
heard that there were thirty foot waves on the North Shore so we drove there in our most comfortable GMC Terrain SUV and enjoyed watching the waves, the surfers and seeing the “Blow Hole”.



The next day we drove to the Ioa State Park, located in a beautiful valley between two mountains.



We knew that food and meals at the Sheraton would be extremely expensive. The Tinkas always had researched the best places food wise and value wise for our lunches and dinners. Dinners were frequently arranged at restaurants along the shore so that we could enjoy the spectacular sunsets to the west over the island of Molokai or into the ocean. One night we decided to have “the best pizza on Maui” and we drove to Prison Street Pizza where we had great ones eating with the locals (they identified me as a tourist even though I had my best Hawaiian shirt on)!

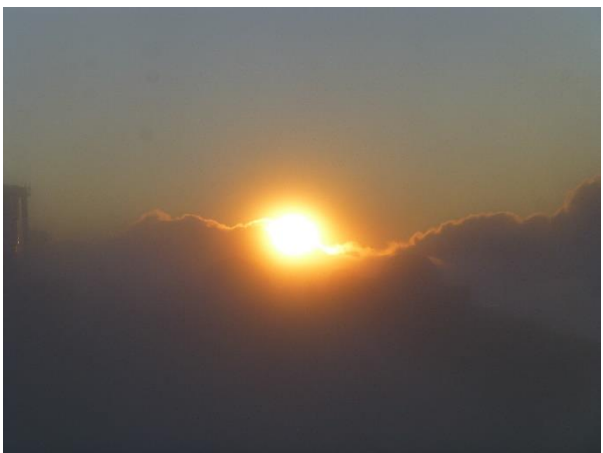




We did spend time in the old towns and whaling villages sightseeing and shopping.



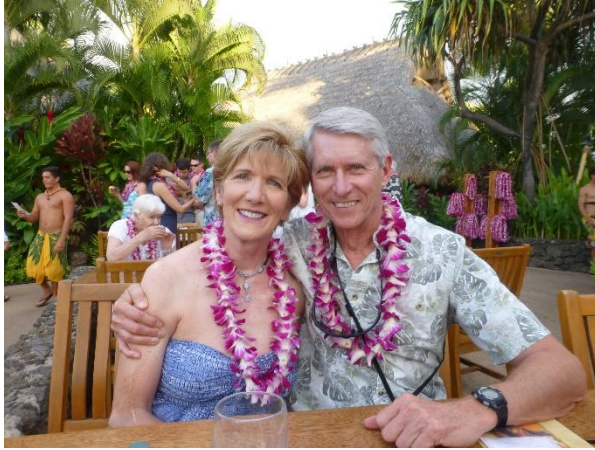
One afternoon we drove to the central part of Maui and then up a narrow winding road to the top of the extinct volcano that originally formed the island. We were over 10,000 feet above sea level. We were here to watch the sunset. The top of the volcano is most usually covered in clouds. The winds had been gusting at 70 mph at the top so we had waited for a calm day to go to the top. There was little wind but the clouds did obscure the views.



A real highlight of the vacation was the day we spent driving "The Road to Hana", said to be one of the most scenic drives in the world. We drove for miles along the North Coast of Maui on an extremely narrow (frequently one lane) and twisty road. We enjoyed a nice lunch in the quaint village of Hana, where the road around the island ends.



One night we went to a luau said to be the best one on the island, the “Old Lahaina Luau” right on the shore line in the old town. Most enjoyable, facilitated by the open bar.



We also went on a morning whale watching cruise on a nice 16 passenger catamaran. It was a most pleasant day to be out on the water. The whale watching season (when they are down from Alaska for birthing and raising the young) is from December 15th through April, so our cruise on December 16th was quite early in the season and we think we were lucky to see all of the whales that we did spot.



On our last full day on Maui we drove to the western side of the North Shore and drove a most scenic (but mostly one lane road!) around the north shore.



I enjoyed the snorkeling right off the beach at the Sheraton. The highlight was spotting a sea turtle and getting some great pictures with my old waterproof camera.





On our last day, December 18th, our flight to Dallas was to leave at 6 PM. We drove towards the airport and toured two interesting museums, the old Bailey's Homestead and the Sugar Museum, had an early dinner, and turned in our rental car.

It was so nice of Alamo Rental Cars to overlook the dirt and the couple of slight dents and scrapes that we had inflicted on our GMC Terrain SUV; those narrow mountain roads were tough!

We all arrived home the next day, Saturday December 19th, Jaime picking us up at the Pittsburgh Airport. It is so great that she now lives almost right next to us as she was able to take good care of Pepper our good dog.

This was the most enjoyable and restful vacation. Thanks to the Tinkas for conceiving and organizing all of this. The weather was perfect all the time we were in Maui. Highs in the low 80s and lows in the upper 60s with only a very occasional short shower. Mostly brilliant sun.

Best, Jim