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*John News*



Spring 2001 Edition ©SkiY2K1

# In Search of Credentials, Confidentials, Babes, Assassins and the Unicartoonist



## *What's with the Cover?*

What does the Cover mean? For the past few weeks, ever since Rocky emailed a flight schedule to Honolulu, I have been racking my brain to recall a few critical mass events when the WELH Bachelor Summit invaded Oahu in June, 1985.

Normally, I would go to the Loft Library at Chez Pablo and riff through the various past Real News issues. Nothing.

Then I would put on a miner's lantern helmet and go into the closet to dig for other past issues of the Real News, photographs, notes, or receipts.

Again, no luck.

Not to despair, I thought, there must be a "digital" version of the WELH BS Hawaii somewhere in the homestead cyber-graveyard.

Nothing on the salvage disks; nothing on the older Mac si where most of the editions were put together before being zapped on the HP laser printer.

In times of NASA flipping a coin at launch, I even tried getting the dusty antique Macs fired up last weekend.

A Mac SE attached to a Cutting Edge 45 MB hard drive -- now there is some techno muleskinner ox cart power there. They say Apple can't make anything worth a damn, but this fine dust collector fired up without a problem. Amazing. With a whopping 2 MB of memory, and running on System 6.0.4 I searched for the information about The Trip. None.

I'd have to go further back into Time-- to the dawn of desk top publishing.

Under a Targus case, and under the boxes of three generations of software program manuals, under unwrapped Christmas presents from the late 1990s, and under the Fear of Failure, I slowly retrieved the Mac Plus.

It still had its Fanny Mac fan attached to the top, with two umbilical cords snaking to the ground. I powered it up and.... it also booted an old happy mac face. The Plus, waning with system 6.0.3 but with 4 MB RAM, yielded no information from the inserted diskettes.

The final solution was the autopsy of Jasmine. Now, inspired by the latest Titanium G4 PowerBook at CompUSA, I brought out the Jasmine 100 hard Drive. It is entombed under a solid sheet of Navy battleship grade steel.

After numerous tries with and without an archaic Norton Utility 2.0 disk to boot the drive, it would not recognize. I knew this, that is where the salvage disks came from for the RN 1994 Best of Edition (see, the beach babe on this cover was on that cover).

It now has come to pass that I did not document, if not at all, The Trip to Waikiki. A fatal mistake for a man who graduated from EIU with one active remaining brain cell. So the march to sanity begins or ends with this special issue.

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## *No Wonder Hawaii is still in a Recession*

As a former member of the heavily mortgaged Fourth Estate, in nolo contendere ex post facto, only facts can lead to the Truth. And the Truth will set you free. And free stuff is never free.

May Day! May Day!

I was told that the temperature reached 90 this afternoon. Having been sentenced to office work for the entire day, without an opportunity to even stick my head out the door, lest a guillotine blade would crash down from the door jam, I would not know.

I would not know how many convertibles with the tops down drove by my office today. I would not know how many topless Detroit classics had behind the wheel alluring women on their spring prow. I would not know how many office workers in the Loop leaped to their deaths for being cooped up like hens on steroids in glass towers. I would not know how many women sunned topless on North Avenue Beach this afternoon. I would not know how many giddy camera crews combed North Avenue beach for such a story.

(Memo to Self: watch 10 o'clock news tonight.)

The weather broke in Chicago faster than an old fashion political bribery scandal. Images of sun, beaches, mindless alcoholism, naive adventurism come flowing back on days like this one. Then the icepick of reality sets a heavy blow to the continuity of a peaceful daydream.

Usually, such a metaphoric assault would glance off my thick defensive spinal cord. But then a few full metal neon billboard size flashes of consciousness hit the frontal lobe.

Has it been more than fifteen (15) years since The Trip?!

Calendars don't lie.

Has anything really changed in the past fifteen years?

Social calendars don't lie.

Has the reason four bachelors flew halfway around the globe lost any meaning?

Social protocols still have their place in the post-industrial American prairie.

In the past fifteen years, I am still at the same job, at the same location. I have moved three times, but no more than three miles. I have had only one full week vacation. And it took three months to catch up on the workload upon my return.

Life is a vicious cycle. It depends on which side of the vortex you find yourself on. Are you riding up the side with the expensive garbage, cedar shingles and Lexus auto panels of the rich neighbors? Or are you on the downside spin of the plastic patio furniture, double wide trailers and presidential pardons?

Hawaii only gets in the news these days when submariners try to impress visitors by trying to pop surface circus wheelies, or when a Russian satellite space debris is hurling toward earth.

Human wreckage has many scrap heaps. (See, cover, of the Unicartoonist, who is still at large; he was on cover of Fall 1996 RN Big Picture Edition). It is the Big Picture that needs to be re-examined from time to time, for good or ill. Besides, the statute of limitations has expired.

WELH was the EIU student radio station. Like most things, it came to an early demise in the name of progress and an FM transmitter, much like the Hawaiian economy in the mid 1980s.

Japan was the Rage. Long before the slogan, "Be Like Mike," it was "Be Like Japan." The go go 1980s Japanese economy led to massive buying spree of US real estate, US companies and huge imbalance of trade concerns. Most of the resort property in Hawaii had flipped to Japanese ownership; at it was a favorite Asian tourist place.

Was it the purpose of four EIU alumni to venture to Honolulu to keep American greenbacks working at home? Or was being 4, 5 or 6 years removed from college graduation and into workplace hell the excuse for one giant leap for bachelorkind? I don't recall.

And that is the problem. I should recall. Or at least have the arsenal of insane ramblings to refresh my recollection on these past events. Who knows, there may be a Real Story buried in that mental time capsule.

## *The Early Thoughts of Missing Recollections and Generalizations*

Ancient Hawaiian sports consisted of contests of running, jumping, boxing, wrestling, swimming, diving, canoe-racing, and surf riding.

Modern tourists led non-contact encounters of the beach combing, snorkeling, boogie boarding, and island bar drinking pastimes.

Before engaging in war or any other important human enterprise that had danger or doubt, human and other sacrifices were made by the ancient islanders. The priests named the number of men required for the sacrifice, and the king provided them

from his prisoners, malefactors or drifters along the highway. The victims were slain with clubs and their bodies and other offerings left upon the alter to decay.

Remember, at this time, I had thick, bound photocopy of the Illinois criminal code entitled as "The Serious Weekend Manual" in the trunk of the Emma Peel Oldsmobile. I was prepared to enter the far western outpost of American civilization.

Our island liaison officer, the good Dr. Black, had told Mr. Hash that the proposed accommodations were "four stars." I figured that he meant one star for the roaches, one star for the lack of maid services, one star for danger and one star for lack of amenities.

The Waikiki Tower was better than I expected for a low

budget, tour group dive. To cut costs to the bone, we were packaged into a tour group charter through a Charleston travel agent. The Tower was across the alley from the oceanview Reef Hotel on the beach, and adjacent to the Edgewater Hotel.



In trying to remember the name of the hotel was a mindmelt, since the Waikiki real estate market has churned more than a late 1990s stockbroker's account. The Edgewater had an open air lobby, and sort of blends into the WT, if I recall correctly. The focal point of the lower floor to us was the measly, birdbath size pool, and the open air, on the beachwalk bar where people watching, mai tai debating, and quaint flophouse charm was our unofficial HQ.

It was a fine bar to watch the jittery pale couples wander to the beach in the morning, and after a day of extra large rum mai tais, watch the lobster roasted couples crawl back to their hotels.

It was a stark contrast to the previous eight hour flight day

packed on a DC-10 with the entire population of Southeast Asia.

The plane was packed tighter than a Saigon farm bus on the way to market. Every seat was taken, and each passenger was stewing in their own juices and boredom. At least we had the advantage of being on the end of the 2-7-2 seat configuration, except for Herr Hepner, who would routinely get his seat slammed from a restless Rocky.

Arriving at the Honolulu airport was uneventful, except for the stereotypical lai ceremony, and opportune tourist photograph taking by a local gal. This was the omen that the hawkers circle around mainlanders like buzzards around a feeding lion's den.

Our hotel was surrounded by cramped sidewalks and alleyways filled with "Solid 14K Gold 1/2 Price" stands. Anything that could keep a shine was bartered for greenbacks. We avoided those pesky peddlers at all costs.

The bachelor plan was a simple plan. We would take in a hearty big late breakfast/brunch at a nearby buffet, then flee the hotel environs in the rented jeep, then return to drink at the hotel bar, then find a fine place for a descent local meal, then drink some more to level of passing out. Being highly educated souls, this bachelor plan worked to near perfection.



## *Hanauma Bay Beach Park: In Search of Wildlife and Still Lives*

On the edge of the eastern island, at Koko Head, there is a small cliff road. One parks their vehicle there and trek down the steep incline toward the white sand bay of Hanauma.

This state beach park is a living marine aquarium, and a popular refuge for the detoxing tourist set.

We were in the latter class to hit the beach head.

The large half mile swath of thick white sand can easily melt a day away under the temperate sun. Snorkeling and swimming are key to the shallow corral reef.

For those souls like Herr Hep, the concept of an afternoon of free reef sushi through the snorkel was new. Besides, the little groms get caught in the intake too much.

Because of the crater like plunge from the roadway parking, or lack thereof, it was a freefall walk down to the beach, and in return, a motherlode trek back to the rim.

People stayed longer on the beach out of dread of pack



muling their beach possessions uphill to their cars.

Having spent most of the day passed out on the beach like the ripe pineapple that I had become, there are a few thoughts of this beach experience.

First, when Hep surfaces he appears to be a PBS documentary on the rare albino humanoid otter.

Second, women on the beach love to read their paperbacks.

Third, parents are so embalmed by the view that they let their small children wander the lava rock croppings near the Witches Brew, a turbulent area on the bay's right side where the Molokai Express, a wicked transoceanic current that sweeps across the bay lies.

Fourth, if you let Mr. Hash drive, you have a 50% chance of arriving alive.

You see, the first island vehicle was a new Suzuki jeep. In the era of Japanese power, the rental agency had this fine white sheet metal lurking on the lot.

We crammed into this sardine can on wheels. Rock riding shotgun with Hep and

I clammed in the back jumpseat.

In making an alleged legal u-turn, Hash tipped this unsteady vehicle on two wheels. Within a pregnant pause of doom, the vehicle slowly lurched back down on all fours.

It was immediately driven back to the rental agency and exchanged for some real American, cow tipping, metal, a Jeep CJ. Buy American; Die American.



And then there was the Rock, who attempted to reclaim the entire beach as property of England and the Earl of Sandwich, his beefy British hero.

## *Is This America? Or was This the Things to Come?*

Theorists tell that Time is an endless river that recirculates throughout the universe, never coming in contact with the same streambed spot.

Well, looking back at the sights of Honolulu in 1985 from the blood shot, cynical and cold eyes of 2001, either Hawaii was 20 years ahead of its time, or 20 years behind.

Example. Working middle managers, accountants, attorneys and the like wander the downtown in slacks and Hawaiian shirts. A business suit and tie is as rare as an albino humanoid otter. But they shrug their shoulders and coo, "it's the lifestyle, man." This casual dress that cuts across the entire spectrum of working class office workers would not hit home on the mainland until the yuppiefied, high tech silicon IPO tech wizards of the mid to late 1990s. And in turn, the professionalism that used to embodied in the blue suit IBM salesman to the gray suit banker has eroded away into the cloth of a beach bum.

It was a culture shock to see normal office workers in "weekend" clothing. It lacked a sense of professionalism associated with, in a generic sense, professions.

Two decades later, the *laisse faire* of the workplace dress code has led to a *laisse faire* demeanor in professionalism. I have seen attorneys in court looking like they are stepping up to the first tee box. Attorneys at

closings dressed for the beach. This was unheard of ten years ago.

Hawaii in 1985 was a service driven economy. Tourism and military-government services were king.

So there was a built in lower standard of living. The trade-off was the natural weather conditions and breezy island beach lifestyle. One skimps by to catch The Ride.

In fact, there are people who come to the Isles on vacation and never come home. They find the scenery so intoxicating that they are instantly addicted to the palms and sand that they torpedo their jobs, families, and mainland friends only after a few days in the mai tai cooled sun.

And how do these mainlanders fit into current Honolulu society? Probably, not well. The islanders do the heavy lifting, so to speak. Natives are the farmers, drivers, hotel staff, baggers and the like. Sons of colonists are the accountants, lawyers, educators, supervisors and middle class managers. Outsiders are outsiders. Tourists are tolerated because they spend money which will circulate around the state until it would be sucked back to Japan in profits.

None of our group became so rooted as to dig into the soil and sprout coconut palms.

But you could tell that there were stories of the runaway California beach kids, now ten years removed, serving drinks

behind the longboard bar.

When we first checked into the Tower, the lobby was filled with airport newbies. It appeared that every southern California white middle class household with a graduating high school senior girl gave her an airplane ticket to Honolulu for at graduation. The lobby was filled with Valley girls. They surrounded their leader, who was fumbling through a stack of older sisters' drivers licenses so each could have some avenue of walking into the hotel bar with some class.

I had not looked up Hawaiian criminal codes before making the trip, but I thought if the ancient custom of the King were any portion of the punishment, jailbait would have been a painful, public death sentence; human chum.

Today, some parents would not bat an eye about sending their teenage daughter on a class trip to Hawaii unchaperoned. A generation of latchkey kids have been raising themselves while their ME generation parents concentrate on themselves.

But the Aloha State has been in a recession for more than ten years, but no one has noticed. When the Japanese stock market plunged in the 90s, so did the majority of Asian tourism to Hawaii. When Singapore, Korea and China undercut Japan's electronic manufacturing, more wealth was lost, and it dried up Hawaii's economy.

## *Picture a Room with a War Zone of Bachelor Decor with no View*

The room had twin beds covered in a thin, green, PX army blanket left over from a Robert Mitchum 1950s war movie set.

It had only one good feature--- a refrigerator. The frig was immediately stocked with quarts of Budweiser liberated from the nearby convenience store.

Throughout the week, only booze and the rotting airport tourist lais occupied the refrigerator.

The television set had knobs. It was more retro than the Zeniths in Elvis's Jungle Room. And the oriental newsbabes were telling us the news that was days behind. No CNN live feed. The networks still airlifted stories on film reels from San Francisco.

But in paradise, who needs to know any news.

Like, the Civil War had ended one hundred years earlier. Rocky thought decorating the room with a large Stars & Bars would give the room some color.

No wonder the maids refused to clean.

Or was it the fact that Rocky's snoring was a cross between a harpooned whale, a tsunami hitting shore and a rusty chain saw?

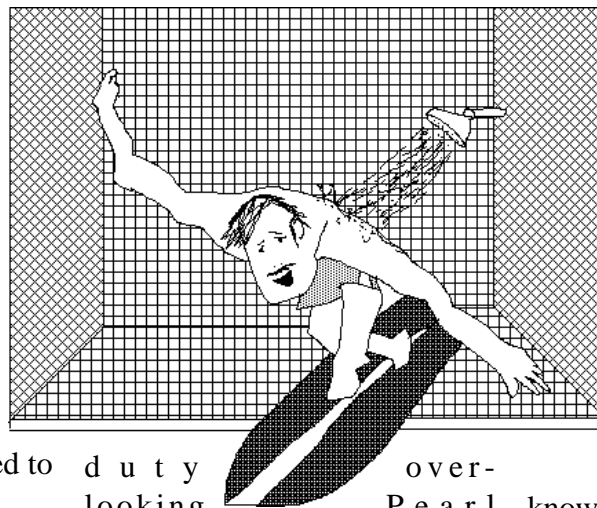
But all construction on the island had that cinderblock feel. While at the officer's club



at Tripler one evening, the OC reminded me of a 1960s bland parochial school multipurpose room.

Getting past security onto the base was really no problem. However, the guards always wanted us to kill the headlights on the jeep. Black out rules.

You could tell that guard



duty overlooking Pearl Harbor still had the guardhouse jitters. Especially if you had guard duty on a Saturday night.

The wide eyed privates would refuse to doze off. Peering into the dark skies, hoping against hope that you see any flash of aviation wing metal off

the moon light, descending upon the silhouette of the Missouri down below in the harbor. Bad memories are hard to forget.

The officers's quarters were merely separated Alcatraz cells. No wonder commissioned officers spent their time at the OC, PX

or jumping out of planes without a parachute.

It is an adjustment to the Times. When we first arrived, we were forewarned that our bioclocks would not reset properly for a while. We woke up at 3 a.m. with the other new arrivals, and wandered the Fort DeRussey beach till sunrise.

Hardy lost souls like Hash could not wait to taste the Pacific, so he plunged into the surf at one of these early morning zombie festivals.

The real reason I have turned into a zombie over this story is that somehow it was never written up before, or lost in a Sea of boxes.

Why is it important to know the room number? Well, because before we left the Great Tower, our bottle of Jim Beam was not empty, so I hid it in our hotel room with the note: "Have A Drink on Us, WELH, June 1985." I wonder what a 16 year old bottle of Jim Beam goes for on eBay today?