

Sunday, Captain Hook, Hawaii, And Krist

By John F. Hall

You might call me the church door greeter. I sit in a transport chair and greet the congregation as they come in the church door, at the small church that I go to. In a previous sermon, Pastor Jegin highlighted the words found in Luke, Chapter 12, Verse 48: "To whom much is given, much will be required." I have been blessed, with a little talent, that has allowed me to write my life stories. I give my stories away. Some of my stories might entertain, some might motivate, and some might



inspire. Several of my friends told me, that they enjoy reading my stories, after church services, with a cup of coffee. Looking back to 1977, when I wrote my first nonfiction story, my hope was that just one of my stories, might help just one person.

It seems to go with the territory, that after the age of seventy, my mind forgets some things that would enhance the theme of my story. In a previous story, I had planned to write a few more details about my visits to Diamond Head in Hawaii. It is Hawaii's most recognized landmark. It is known for its hiking trails, stunning coastal views, and its military history. Diamond Head's saucer shaped crater, was formed about 300,000 years ago, during a single explosive eruption that sent ash and fine particles in the air. As these materials settled, they cemented together into rock called tuff, which created the crater. In 1904, Diamond Head was purchased by the government and designated for military use. Fortifications began in 1908 with the construction of gun emplacements, and an entry tunnel through the North wall of the crater from Fort Ruger. Batteries were built to house the coastal artillery.

In the late 1700s, Captain James Cook arrived in Hawaii. He was one of the greatest navigators and explorers of all times. He was killed on February 14, 1779, at Kealakekua Bay, in a confrontation with some indigenous people of Hawaii. One week later, his remains were formally buried at sea, in that Bay. One might say, that he had no one to blame, but himself, for his own demise. He was stabbed and beaten, after attempting to take a ruling Hawaiian Chief hostage, for the return of a stolen boat. The old saying by Benjamin Rush: "Two wrongs don't make one right. Two wrongs won't right a wrong," applies here. The issue was a stolen boat. A resolution should have revolved around a peaceful way to have the stolen boat returned. I view that what Captain Cook tried to do was dumb. And, as Socrates said: "Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average ones from experience, stupid ones have all the answers." Captain Cook might have thought, that attempting to take the Hawaiian Chief hostage, was the best way to secure the return of the stolen boat. He was dead wrong.

Captain James Cook named the volcanic cone, Diamond Head, because he mistook the calcite rock, in the cone, for diamonds. The only thing, that I might have in common with Captain Cook,

is that we first came to Hawaii by ship. He came on the HMS Endeavor, that he commanded. I came on a World War II Liberty ship, commanded by a Merchant Marine Captain. That “rust bucket” of a ship had a top speed of 12 knots, or about 14 miles an hour. It arrived in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, seven days after departing San Francisco, California.

In a previous story, I briefly mentioned that I slept on Waikiki beach for three days. I did not provide many details about my 1965 visit there. The beach is a 71-acre beach front military reservation called Fort DeRussy. It is located in Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii. At that time in history, the beach just had a large public restroom with hot showers. Years later, a 817 room hotel, the Hale Koa (house of the warrior) was constructed. The first night, that I slept on the beach, I was checked by two military police (MP) soldiers. I showed them my orders and my military identification. Laying on that warm Waikiki sand, it seemed hard to believe, that 21 years earlier, that the nearby Pearl Harbor, was attacked by Japan. That country staged a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. It decimated the US Pacific Fleet. The attack killed 1,999 sailors and 109 Marines. It injured 1,178 civilians. President Roosevelt, in a radio broadcast, said: “Yesterday, December 7, 1941 — a date that will live in infamy — the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. That attack happened four years before I was born.

The two MPs patrolling the beach, told me to be careful. I told them that I would be sleeping on the beach, until the Captain of the Merchant Marine ship, sent a small boat, to pick me, and the six members of our security team up. They told me the names of the restaurants, that the local Hawaiians go to, that the food was reasonably priced. I made a non-military second trip to Waikiki beach in 1985, with my wife, Paula, and my son, John. This was three years before I retired from the Kentucky State Police. I registered my off duty weapon with the Honolulu Police Department. I inquired into the hiring practices of that Police Department. I was told that a person has to be a resident of Hawaii, for three years, before they can even apply to join that department.

We stayed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, which is also known as the “Pink Palace of the Pacific. The resort was built in 1927. The six-story, 400 room hotel has a Spanish Moorish style, and it is built on 15 acres of beach frontage. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese fighter planes flew alongside Waikiki beach, in front of the hotel, on their way to attack the US Fleet berthed at Pearl Harbor. I made my third trip to Hawaii in 2005.

My military career was about to come to an end. I contacted my Army Reserve personnel officer. I told him that I had one last two-week annual training, before my mandatory retirement at the age of 60. The personnel officer asked me if I would be willing to go to Tripler Medical Center, to serve as the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Assistant Provost Marshall at the medical center. I would conduct a military security survey of the medical center. The two-week assignment was a great way to end my military service. I enlisted in the Army in 1962, as a private. I would retire,

43 years later, as a Lieutenant Colonel. I asked Paula to come with me. I paid for her travel and other expenses. We had to stay at the Hale Koa Hotel for one week, until quarters became available at the Tripler Medical Center. I was invited, by the Tripler Provost, to attend a Change of Command Ceremony, for the Commander of the 25th Infantry Division, at Schofield Barracks. I was sitting next to an FBI Special Agent. We engaged in a conversation. I mentioned that my wife, Paula, and I were staying at the Hale Koa Hotel. He told me not to upset her, or to tell her that the hotel is a primary target of a potential terrorist attack, because only military and their families can stay there.

The last day of my IRR assignment came on my birthday, June 29th. Paula was a records manager on Fort Campbell, Kentucky, before she became the Chief of Administrative Services at the Fort Campbell Army Hospital. She has a records manager friend, Dorothy Cardus. She retired from Tripler Medical Center. She lives on the side of Oahu. I purchased a birthday cake, and we celebrated my birthday at Dorothy's house. I left the birthday cake for her grandchildren. Dorothy is a native Hawaiian, and she was born in the Big Island (Hawaii Island). We were standing outside of her house, and she told us this true story from her childhood. Her family lived below the Kolekole Pass. At 1,724 feet, the Pass occupies the main gap in the Wai'anae Range. This is where the WWII Japanese fighter planes passed through on their way to bomb Pearl Harbor. Dorothy said: "The planes came through the pass, and they dropped down to about tree top level. They flew by me, and I could see the pilot's faces."

I'm still greeting the people, as I sit in a transport chair, as they come for Sunday church services, in the little church located about five miles from my old house on Dyers Hill. The bells will sound a few minutes before the services start. I will give out a recent story to a few members of the congregation. I will hand one to Pastor Jegrin, as I roll myself to my usual place, at that back of the church, behind the church choir. It's another Sunday coming down. A song by Krist Kristofferson called, "Why Me Lord," and a lyric spins in my mind; "May be Lord, I can show someone else, what I've been through myself, on my way back to You...".

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>