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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

August 12, 2002



Commentary

A Kauai Lens of the World

As many of my readers know, Jean and I spend about four months a year on Kauai. That is necessary knowledge because **NOTHING** looks the same when viewed through a Kauai lens. Fortunately, through modern technology I can still do my real estate business with the exception of taking clients to lunch.

Many of our friends visit the Sandwich Islands during the year and find no different lens, but they stay at a Marriott, watch CNN, and buy USA Today. They might just as well have stayed in San Diego at the Marriott and saved the airfare.

Jean and I live where there are no stop lights for 20 miles in any direction, shop the local 'farmer's market' and watch the cable access channel. More importantly, we read the daily Garden Island newspaper.

Our first day here, for example, the newspaper featured a lot of column inches on Tenzin Palmo, an English woman who spent 12 years living in a high Himalayan cave while engaging in "intense meditation." She is, reputedly, a "renowned Tibetan Buddhist."

I recall that several days before we arrived here, the WorldCom executives had been arrested in handcuffs, but it was not until after our arrival that the news of their arrest made page 4 of The Garden Island, and then the arrest could not garner nearly as much attention as Tenzin Palmo. The newspaper assures us that, "She faced unimaginable cold, wild animals, near starvation, and

avalanches, not to mention the demons of her own mind.” I have no doubt about the last part of that statement.

Mind you, The Garden Island is no rag. It is celebrating its 100th anniversary here on the island, but it also understands what the local population deems important – and the arrest of WorldCom executives is far, far down the line. Kauai is, after all, the Hawaiian island most remote from the Mainland, both physically and culturally.

I have copyrighted a T-Shirt that says, simply, “No care where you from, who you are, what you do. You on MY island now!” Believe me, that IS the basic attitude. One of my T-Shirts that lists the “10 Best Ways to Know You are on Kauai” is that “Maraishi Anybody would beat Bush or Gore.”

Fortunately, we have been here for so long and come so often that we are (almost) accepted. When we arrived at the airport, our car was in the parking lot as planned, with the keys under the seat. Unfortunately, the car was locked! We called a neighbor, the Police Commissioner (a massive native Hawaiian), who first sent an undercover officer to help us get the car open. When that failed, the Commissioner drove 40 minutes to pick us up rather than just call a locksmith!

I know that a lot of my neighbors come to Kauai, but if you stay at Princeville or the Marriott you will miss the real flavor of this island. It is friendly with a real touch of Aloha, but you can't find that in a large hotel. It is filled with mystics, but you won't read about them in USA Today. It is an insular island, but you won't discover that watching CNN.

And there are, reputedly, two conservatives on the Island. The other one lives anonymously, in Kapa'a and keeps his head below the ridge line.

P.S. There is a VERY GOOD CHANCE of a Republican Governor being elected this time -- not because there is some move to the right but rather because there have been more than four decades of VISIBLE Democrat corruption. (Surprised?)



Dolphin Realty

Allen P. Hemphill

Real Estate Broker

15817 Bernardo Center Dr,
111, San Diego, Ca 92127
RB Office (858) 487-4750

29937 Mountain Meadow Road
Suite #5

Hidden Meadows CA 92026
Meadows Office (760)-749-5005

Home Office (760) 749-2654

www.allenhemphill.com
allen@allenhemphill.com