

Ride In Paradise

By Fred LeBlanc

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*Fred & Lisa LeBlanc
pause after a rain shower on the windward side of Oahu*

On the occasion of our 25th wedding anniversary, we were able to head to Hawaii for a special vacation. This was something we had planned for several years. Maui was our island of choice with a side trip planned to Oahu. In the back of our minds was the idea of renting and riding a Gold Wing at some time during the vacation.

The search for a place to rent one fell into place in the traditional GWRRA way. By this we mean we really didn't know where to rent one, but came upon this information while attending a GWRRA function. In July we attended the Region B Rally in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and sat in on the Couple of the Year selection. The Pennsylvania Couple of the Year, Bonnie & Orville McConnell, talked about how they had been to Hawaii and had ridden a Gold Wing during their stay. Needless to say, we made it a point to talk with them during the rally to learn more about their ride. They gave us the name of Gary Kahn of Wing Tours of Hawaii. Through e-mail Bonnie was able to provide us with contact numbers.

October was a very troublesome time for our nation, but Lisa and I heeded the call for normalcy and went off on our adventure. A long 12-hour flight had us in Maui by mid-afternoon on the second of October. Once in Hawaii we made final plans to fly to Oahu on October 7 to meet up with Gary Kahn. We boarded our early flight and watched a beautiful sunrise as we took off from Kahului Airport and headed for Honolulu. The 25-minute flight had us touching down just before 7 a.m.

Gary offered to pick us up, so I made a quick phone call to let him know we had landed. He told us to wait at the curb and look for a bronze Jaguar. Five minutes later we were waving him down. With our helmets in hand we began what was to be a great day.

A short trip to Gary's house had us checking out our GL1500. After the obligatory paperwork, Lisa & I were ready to go. What I didn't realize was that Gary was intending to give us a personal guided tour. He jumped on his black Valkyrie and said, "Follow me." Off we went.

First we ventured up the Pali Highway to Pali Lookout. This oversees a vast valley looking northward. Clouds were around us and rain started just as Gary said, "Not to worry, we'll just go in a different direction." So, reversing course, we headed back toward a scenic coastal route.

We worked our way through downtown Honolulu and past Waikiki, then off towards Diamond Head and into beautiful sunshine. A quick stop at a local eatery for a nice breakfast gave us some energy for the day. Riding to Diamond Head State Park we made a stop at the overlook near "Holona Blowhole." Legend has it a whale is stuck under the rocks and is still spraying water from its blowhole. What we saw was a beautiful rock formation with crashing waves all around. To the left of the blowhole you look down on a famous beach. The love scene from the movie *From Here to Eternity* was filmed here.

Cruising along the windward side of the island is breathtaking as you look at all the colors of the water and landscape mixing with the glorious sunshine.

The Kualoa Beach was our first restroom break. A very small island called "Chinaman's Hat" lies just offshore here.

Continuing, our journey took us across the northern tip of the island heading towards the leeward side. The heat of the day was beginning to creep higher. No fear though, since Gary had the perfect solution in mind—a stop at an out-of-the-way store called Muiri's for some shaved ice. Muiri's is one of those places that only a local would know about. Once refreshed, we were off to the Kamehameha Highway and some great twists and turns as you wind your way up into the mountains. Passing the pineapple plantations, the sweet smell of pineapples permeates the air. Our route brought us past Schofield Barracks and Wheeler Field. These military installations are still active, but of World War II fame.

One destination on the island we absolutely had to see was Pearl Harbor and the USS Arizona Memorial. Gary knew this was a priority for us. Riding down from the mountainous area we could see Pearl Harbor ahead. Arriving at the entrance to the Memorial, Gary gave us directions back to his house and left us to spend there. This was a special stop, as we visited the museum and watched a film about the events leading up to the attack of December 7, 1941. A short boat ride takes you to the Arizona Memorial. Words cannot describe the feelings and thoughts as you realize men are still entombed in this vessel which rests just several feet below where you stand. Much reverence and respect is shown by all who visit here.

The afternoon was beginning to fade, so we headed back towards Gary's house to meet up with our guide. Thinking our tour was nearly over, we had expected to call it a day, but our guide had other ideas. Arriving at Gary's we were introduced to Fred Chan, President of Wing Riders of America, and he wanted to ride. We still had a few hours before we needed to be back at the airport, so off we went. This time Fred was in the lead. Our direction was to the Punch Bowl National Cemetery, positioned literally in a crater on a nearby mountain.

The ride up was challenging to say the least! Lots of turns and switchbacks. Unfortunately, when we arrived the gates were just closing. A quick turn around and we headed for another mountainside with even tighter turns. I got to practice my slow, look, lean and roll technique as we made our way up to Round Top Hill. A most glorious sight awaits you here as you overlook all of Honolulu from a great height.

Like all good things, our day had to come to an end. As we headed back down the mountain we thought how fortunate we were to have met such great people. We also had the opportunity to meet Gary's wife Elithe on our return to his home. It was as if we had all known each other for years—a true testament to the Gold Wing family. Gary presented Lisa and me with a certificate proclaiming we were "Riders In Paradise" in recognition of having achieved the nearly impossible feat of riding a Honda Gold Wing in the beautiful State of Hawaii. The certificate was witnessed by Na'e Heu O Hawaii (Wings of Hawaii - GWRRA Chapter HI-A).

To Gary and Fred we send a big Mahalo (Thank You)! Our visit will be a cherished memory for many years to come. If you ever have the opportunity to visit the 50th state, look these guys up. They surely know how to treat a customer and fellow Gold Winger.

On our return home, while flipping through the December 2001 Wing World, we came upon the Holiday Gift Guide section and noticed some familiar faces. In one of the ads are Gary & Elithe of Wing Riders of America showing off their unique Moha (Aloha) Shirts. To see them again, go to www.wingridersofamerica.com.

Likewise, if you'd like to rent a Gold Wing while in Hawaii, contact:

**Gary Kahn of Wing Tours of Hawaii
at (808) 545-3132.**

Maybe you, too, can enjoy your very own ride in paradise!