



Paradise Regained

By Ken Shields

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I recently became a GWRRA member after a co-worker showed me a copy of Wing World magazine. My wife, Shirley, and I both enjoy reading the magazine.

We had already planned a special occasion trip to Hawaii for our thirty-sixth wedding anniversary, June 10. It would be our first trip to the fiftieth state. We chose Oahu as our primary destination because Pearl Harbor and the USS Arizona Memorial were the top “must see” items on our list of things to see and do. We made hotel and car reservations for five days in Oahu, and cruise reservations for sailing to the Big Island, Maui, Kauai, Fanning Island (the cruise line-mandated foreign port) and back to Oahu.

We were pleasantly surprised and more than a little interested when we opened the June 2002 issue of Wing World and discovered Fred LeBlanc’s article on their “Ride In Paradise.” We had mildly talked about renting a motorcycle while in Hawaii but never dreamed we might be able to rent a Gold Wing!

Both of us are avid Gold Wing fans, an interest acquired from many miles of touring on two full-dress 1976 Wings about 20 years ago. After being away from motorcycling for over 20 years, we recently purchased a pristine 1983 Gold Wing Interstate and have enjoyed re-learning how to ride. We still need to take some rider education courses to improve our skills.

Fred LeBlanc’s article provided all the needed info (isn’t it great how GWRRA helps us out in time of need?), and we called Gary Kahn, GWRRA #87691, to rent a Wing. Gary was waiting for his 2002 yellow GL1800 to be shipped from the mainland, where he and his wife Elithe had recently completed a 3600 mile tour, and he wasn’t sure what kind of arrangements he could make. He asked us to call him upon arrival in Honolulu to firm up our plans.

With the luck that so often blesses Wingers, everything fell right into place and Gary’s Wing arrived the day before we did. That was fortunate because Gary’s black Valkyrie was whimpering in his garage, sidelined while awaiting replacement of a broken sidestand spring.

Gary provided instructions to his house and, after only getting lost once, we arrived at 7:30 a.m., ready to go. It was Saturday, so Gary was able to go with us (he works during the week). We got to meet Fred Chan, president of Wing Riders of America, but he wasn’t able to join us on the ride.

We mounted our teal ’95 GL1500, Gary climbed on his yellow Wing, and we were off. We didn’t do the challenging ride Fred described in his article because Gary knew our riding skills were limited. He set a very comfortable pace, consistent with our skills. We saw all the sights Fred reported, just at a slower pace.

Hawaii is just as spectacular leaning 15 degrees into a curve as leaning 45 degrees.

On the way to Diamond Head, we stopped at Jack’s Café for a really good breakfast, then we were off again. We tuned to Channel 1 and Gary narrated as we rode. We had already seen most of the sights from a rented convertible, but seeing it from a Wing, enhanced by Gary’s extensive knowledge, was a considerable improvement. A few highlights included the Holona Blowhole, the beach where the famous love scene in From Here to Eternity was filmed, and Punch Bowl National Cemetery. It’s a moderately strenuous climb up steps and a ramp to the top, but the panoramic view of Honolulu and most of the island are well worth the effort.

All good things must end, and ours ended with a certificate from Gary’s Chapter, Na’e Heu O Hawaii (Wings of Hawaii – GWRRA Chapter HI-A), showing that we were “Riders in Paradise.” Shirley and I extend the Hawaiian Mahalo (thank you) to Wing World and to Gary for the high point of our trip. The first thing either of us mention when talking about the trip is the Great Gold Wing adventure.

We recommend that anyone planning a trip to Hawaii call Gary Kahn of Wing House Tours at (808) 545-3132 to set up your own “Ride in Paradise.”