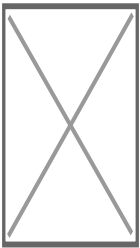


## Falling in love with Kona

### In Process

by Glen Doss, Major –



I have fallen in love with Kona, Hawaii.

February 2, 2006, marked one year since my wife Mary and I, traveling from Los Angeles, stepped from a plane and took in with a gasp the wonderland that was to be our new home. What a beautiful place to

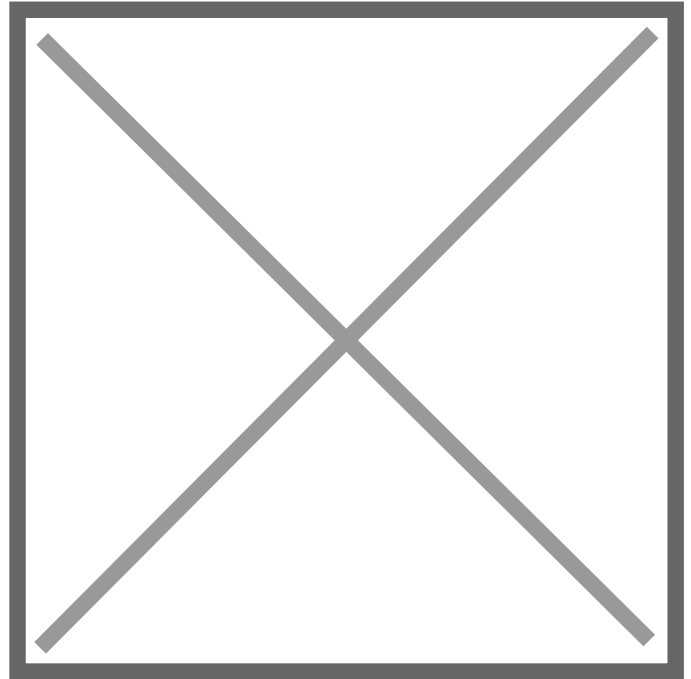
live!

I'm referring not just to luscious fields flecked with flamboyant blossoms or beaches so pristine it seems time has stood still. No, while all this priceless bounty is a wonder to behold, it's the people of whom I speak.

Kona residents have a definite quality that continues to amaze me. I mean the patience, the tolerance, the sensitive way each relates to the other. I think of them all today with a singing in my soul! Like the mechanic—in front of whose house my '93 Buick sputtered to a stop as I made the rounds one Sunday morning picking up church commuters—who corrected the problem with but two shakes of a lamb's tail and wouldn't take a dime for his troubles!

Fondly I recall numerous meetings in which I watched intrigued as Lee Stuart, Kawika Marquez, Roz Cohen, Ollie Olinger and friends strategized, mulling over logistics of a fundraiser for children orphaned in the December 2004 tsunami. The group's members comprised a beautiful mosaic—different colors, genders, occupations, faiths, personality types. Yet a common interest cut through all them all—an overriding desire to help hurting children thousands of miles away. What they had in common was love!

I think of the young housewife, Riane Capone, who called me after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast. "Let's put up a booth in front of Wal-Mart and raise funds," she pleaded. "Let's do *something* to help!" Wal-Mart agreed; then, one after another, caring individuals from the Kona community stepped forward to help. The response from the public was overwhelming.



I remember the compassionate, big-hearted members of the Kona Rotary Club who rang the bell for three days, raising money for our Christmas kettle campaign. “We’re going for a record,” they announced, working the crowd. “It’s not about us; it’s about them!” remarked club president Dick Hershberger, referring to the community’s poor.

I recall a 30-something housewife, a child tugging on each arm as she paused at the kettle, lines circling her eyes conveying she worked long hours for low pay. I was overcome with the deepest respect as she dug through her purse, pulling out a \$50 dollar bill. Slipping the money into the kettle, she turned with a smile of gratitude. “There are others who need this more than I,” she said.

The compassion is perhaps most striking in interactions with the business community. Compared with their counterparts in large mainland cities where I have worked I have found that by and large, Kona business men and women relate to one another at a deeper level—that is, they don’t see others as only a potential source of revenue, they really seem to care about the person.

This relational element is particularly illustrated, I think, by the insistence on the use of the first name. As a Salvation Army officer in the mainland I am usually addressed by the title of “major.” This has always somewhat irked me since I see myself first and foremost as a person, an individual, and only secondarily as a Salvation Army officer. In Kona I am relieved that people really want to know my first name and then proceed to use it.

This Christmas, after a man stuffed a bill in a kettle near where I was standing, I remarked: “God bless you, sir.” He abruptly spun about and, with a broad smile, thrust out a hand. “My name’s Tom; what’s yours?” he asked. With an embarrassed chuckle, I shook his hand and replied, “My name’s Glen. Thank you, and God bless you.” “And God bless you, Glen,” he responded, grinning from ear to ear.

One of the marks of a godly person, emphasized in both the Old and the New Testaments, is compliance with God’s command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Lev. 19:18; Matt 22:39) Most people, I believe, would concur that this maxim is lived out strikingly in Kona, this beautiful city with which I have fallen in love.