

Out and About

Journeys Completed or Contemplated

CHANTING INTO HALAWA

by Pam Mandel
Freelance travel writer and photographer

Gaining access into this heaven on earth
requires more than good intentions.

We were stopped in the middle of a narrow, winding road by a vehicle coming the other way. The big guy behind the wheel rolled down his window. “Are you Pam?” he asked. “I have to drop my cousin off at school; I’ll be back as soon as I can. Head down to the end of the road, OK? The beach is there. Hang out. I’ll be along soon.”

West Moloka’I. Calling it West Moloka’I makes it sound like I’d traveled some distance, but I’d been in the car for only half an hour. Maybe longer, because I’d stopped frequently to take pictures and once to buy some snacks. The guy driving the pickup truck on the uphill side of the road was Lawrence Kalainia Kamani Aki. Not long after we’d crossed paths

on the road, he returned to the sandy parking lot.

He was a tough-looking guy in board shorts and a T-shirt, but he had a big, easy smile. “I’ve heard about you ...” I started, and he told me, yeah, he’s *that* guy. He’s the one who scowls at trespassers, the one who gives grief to visitors who ignore the “*kapu*” signs that dot the inland side of the road.

He explains it a bit further. It’s not so much that they don’t want to share this beautiful place, it’s that if someone gets lost or injured on the rocky trail, they’re responsible. It’s easier for everyone to keep it private and to guide guests; that way there’s no drama and everyone treats the place with respect.

“Well, thanks for having me. I’m happy to be here,” I say. Everything changes in his face in that moment, and he smiles, big.

Halawa is a private place, not a city park. It’s *kalo* (tarot) patches farmed by Native Hawaiians for generations. It’s a little watercourse that runs from the waterfall. It’s stones with stories. To gain access, Julie-Anne Bicoy, head of the island’s tiny tourism department, formally introduces us to Lawrence. Lawrence then leads us up the trail, past all the no

trespassing signs, where we meet Anakala Pilipo Solatorio, the elder of this land.

We’re just a little group, five total: Julie; a plumber and his wife from Queens via Poland; a sad-eyed man from California; and me. We fall into an easy camaraderie, but before we take one step across the property line into the Halawa Valley, we must perform protocol. We must ask for permission to cross onto this sacred land. We stop our fellow travelers’ chatter and focus on our local hosts as they tell us what is about to happen.

It’s complicated. First, Lawrence blows a conch shell; the sound fills the heavy air and sends the message, “Hey, we’re here! We want you to know that we’re here!” There’s a response, and the chants begin. If I had a chant, I would sing out my history. I would tell the keepers of this river valley about where I’m from; I want to see the falls and learn their story. Then, the response — in Hawaiian: “Yes, welcome; we are here, and you may visit us. You are welcome!” The words change for every place, but the meaning is essentially the same.

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Winter's Bone (2010)

It is, incredibly, the 21st century; although from an initial glimpse at the backwoods world of *Winter's Bone* (2010), you might be forgiven for assuming we are in a distant time. Seventeen-year-old Ree Dolly (Jennifer Lawrence), who lives with a couple of younger siblings in a shack in the Missouri Ozarks, searches for her missing father; she's about to lose the family farm if she can't find him. What she discovers is a world of deeply-ingrained codes that have existed — outside the law — for generations, a world in which her own death would be a minor event in the community's maintenance of those codes. Yet Ree plunges ahead anyway, breaking the rules and not asking for permission. Director Debra Granik told me Ree was like a truth-seeker from a traditional Western: "She's warned; she's told not to trespass or transgress, and she does so because she feels that it's worth it. We called her a Western hero in a girl's body." She might just be the defining heroine from the last few years of movies.

MUSIC REVIEWS

Truly groundbreaking musicians never ask for permission to create their music. There has always been a rebellious attitude in what these artists or bands record, epitomizing the "we don't give a ..." attitude toward the predominant trends of the day.

by Joe Rodriguez / Freelance music writer



Pirate Radio (Album) — Various Artists, 2009

Pirate Radio is the real-life story of Radio Caroline, a boat anchored off the coast of Britain in the '60s with the mission of skirting the BBC's regulations and broadcast rock and roll to the masses. The soundtrack offers a heady collection of some of the best music from that era, artfully woven into the story. The 32 tracks of soul, classic rock, pop and R&B feature the likes of The Who, The Troggs, Otis Redding, The Supremes, Procol Harum and many more. The Turtles' "Elenore" and "Father and Son" by Cat Stevens are so significant within the film that one can't hear them without flashing back to those scenes over and over. Buy the soundtrack and the movie; the music and film work together in evoking the power of music during that provocative and rule-breaking time.



Bringing It All Back Home (Album) — Bob Dylan, 1965

Dylan established himself early on as one of the best acoustic folk music troubadours ever, so anything he produced was considered golden in the folk community ... until 1965. After being influenced by The Animals' rocked-out version of "House of the Rising Sun," Dylan was inspired to head into the studio and record with an actual rock band. The opening track, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," sang out that this was a new Dylan, rocking and electric, personal and edgy with his content. The mounting alienation of his folk fan base reached a crescendo a few months later at the Newport Folk Festival. There, a largely unimpressed folk community gave him and his band a cold reception. Dylan, thankfully, didn't need, or seek, anyone's permission to expand his musical horizons.



The Definitive Collection (Album) — Loretta Lynn, 2005

One of eight children in a family from the coal town of Butcher Holler, Kentucky, Loretta Lynn escaped that town by marrying young and then spent more than a decade raising four kids and learning to play the guitar. Lynn broke ranks with the male-dominated country/western industry of the '60s and '70s, penning heartfelt and empowering "take no crap" narratives that defiantly asked nobody for permission. Feminism was on the rise, and her music changed what women in country music sang for decades to come. Among the riskier hits are songs like "Don't Come Home a Drinkin' (With Lovin' on Your Mind)," about a wife unafraid to stand up to her drunk husband; and "Rated X," a look at divorced women and the stigma of being easy. The most radical song in this collection is "The Pill," about a wife celebrating having access to birth control. Banned by many radio stations, it still became a major hit for the coalminer's daughter. With this collection, Ms. Lynn grants us access to her personal life and the challenges that women of all walks of life face. A rebel in lipstick, and a true original. ♦

Provide clear expectations if you choose to transfer wealth during your lifetime. I had a client who wisely made annual exclusion gifts to her four children to lower her estate below the Federal taxable level. However, it became clear after a couple years that these gifts were creating a false sense that Mom was a replacement 401(k), as two of the four children were using the gifts to increase their current standard of living rather than saving the gifts for their own retirement years. We combatted this problem by providing a reasonable estimate of what each child would inherit in total. This gave them the necessary reality check that Mom wasn't going to replace the need to save.

Give each child a copy of your Will and explain the thought process you

went through in its drafting. I strongly believe that some of the snarky remarks made by heirs about their parents' financial decisions are due to unresolved feelings of unfairness or entitlement. By providing the Will before your death, you can help settle up some of these perceived wrongs (Jimmy was the baby and got so much more than me as the oldest!) and explain your decisions in depth. This makes for a powerful opportunity for this conversation during your lifetime rather than at the funeral.

If you are the child in this scenario, consider asking your parents for this information if you are hearing murmurings among your siblings (and even if you aren't). Let your folks know that you think it would be good if they filled

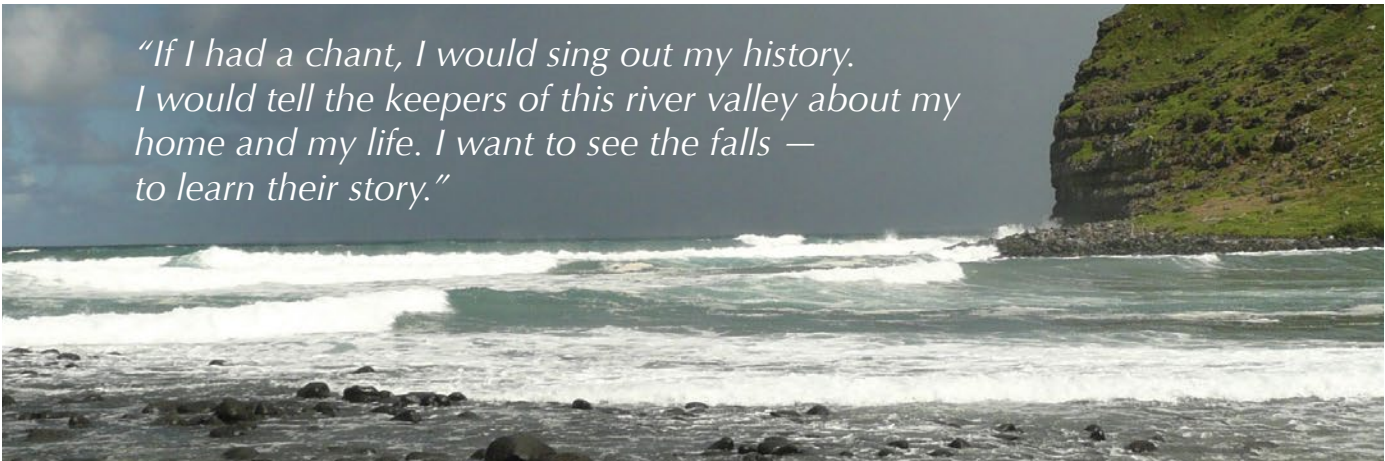
the vacuum with fact to replace fiction.

Bottom line, permission has already been granted by the simple fact that you are an adult. Conversation with your heirs that provides some context around your money decisions can help to clarify any misconceptions they might have, as well as yield non-financial dividends. ♦

Bibliography

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Julie hands me a big green coconut, and I pass it along to Anakala, the elder. It's *really* the thought that counts because coconuts are, of course, as plentiful as, well, coconuts here. It's the act of presenting a gift that matters. "I brought you this gift in thanks for your permission to visit your place." Anakala takes the coconut and places it on a little trilside altar with the desiccated leaves of leis and fading flowers offered by other visitors.

Then, I stand toe to toe with the storyteller, the teacher, the elder, and he presses his forehead to mine, the bridge of his nose to mine. We take a deep breath, eyes wide open. It feels like a long time. Everything collapses into the moment, and I think about what I am doing here. What are my intentions in this place? What do I carry with me? What will I take away?

It is almost too personal, this greeting, and I close my eyes to regain my composure. When I open them again, the moment has passed. The rest of our group greets Anakala the same way, and then, we're on our way, hiking up the dusty trail,

picking our way through the lava rocks, learning the names of the vines and trees and waters that come from up high.

At the end of the day I return to the little parking lot at the end of the road. The beach here is a scoop of black sand lined with velvet green cliffs. Julie and I are the only ones left. I carry my shoes and pick my way down to the surf. Julie laughs at me. "You've gone local!" she says and snaps my picture.

Sometimes I imagine coming back to Halawa, of asking to visit again in my own language, in my own way. "I don't expect you to remember my visit," I would sing up the trail. "But this place seems to be a part of me now. I have brought you coffee, or ti leaves, or this coconut that is shiny and green. And if you will allow it, I would like to once again stand in the waterfall and feel the cool air of this beautiful place."

I have forgotten the names of the trees, and I only vaguely remember the story about the mythical lizard of the waterfall. But I remember exactly what to do in order to visit again. I must ask. ♦