

Lanikai

Rev. 5/11/98

The name, Lanikai, means heavenly water in Hawaiian, and surely this stretch of beach on Oahu's north shore meets this definition. First I must say that the concept of compass direction "north" had no meaning to me as a child in Hawaii, as no one ever used "north" as I was growing up. It was mauka (toward the mountains) or makai (toward the ocean.) Windward was another designation for the side of the island opposite Honolulu. To get to Lanikai one went over the Pali road towards Kaneohe, past Kailua and ended up at these heavenly waters. The narrow winding road down the face of the Pali cliff face caused many a vehicle to stop to let one of the occupants out as a result of car sickness. Of course you could go the long way around Diamond Head and come in from the other direction, but I don't ever remember that we ever went that way.

The attraction to Lanikai was our get away beach house. To enter the property it was necessary to unhook the heavy chain that had a small sign suspended from it noting "A.L. Craig" as the owner of the property. A hedge along the uncurbed street hid the house and other buildings from view. The house itself was on a concrete slab with single wall construction. This was really single wall, as the outside siding was attached to the two by four framing and there was no inside wall as such. It was all painted of course, and we never gave it a thought because the weather was always warm and there was no concern for loss of heat. There were two bedrooms and a third was built later by enclosing one end of the outside open covered porch. The cesspool sewer system was rather fragile in that it was so close to the ocean, so we often used the garden hose outside to "shower" to rid ourselves of the salty crust from the ocean or the dirt from playing. There were two other small buildings on the property as well. One was a single car garage which tended to be more like a large packing crate, as it was difficult to exit the car if you rode in with the folks. The other building which was quite close to the house was a combination carport, half bath, and maid's quarters a common provision in the days of cheap domestic help. I always remember it being used as a large spare bedroom for guests and family friends, as well as a store room. As one came into the property with its tough grass in the sandy soil, off to the right was a scorched section of ground off in the corner used to burn the trash and garbage, as there was no pick up in the area at the time. All along one side of the long narrow lot was a rather formidable hedge which bordered the right of way path that led from the street to the beach, so that residents living up from the beach had access. Across the front of the lot just up from the beach were a row of ironwood trees, with its dense wood and "leaves" that were like flexible segmented pine needles. There was a wide break at one side to allow a boat to be taken down to the water. In the yard was a

rock and concrete grill complete with a welded re-bar grate. The term barbecue was not in use at that time. Over by the garage and off from the corner of the house was a sunken fish pond.

The fish pond is almost a story in itself. I think it was Bob's idea that we have a fishpond. He and Dad dug the hole. Basaltic lava rock was used to build the structure, a rectangular pool about four by eight and about three or so feet deep. Being fairly young at the time, I was not involved in the construction. Mom, Dad, and Bob were the chief masons. What I do remember was the gathering of the fish. We all piled into the family Packard sedan and went up to some unremembered stream and caught minnows which were brought down to the fish pond. Suitable aquatic vegetation was put into an old container and the pond was filled. This was a haven for mosquitoes, so there was no real need to feed the fish. One problem with the whole design was that of drainage. Trips to Lanikai meant siphoning out about half of the dirty water and then refilling in with fresh. One of the reasons that this fish pond and especially the gathering of the fish sticks in my memory is that this is one of the very few occasions that I can really remember where we all did something together as a family. My siblings all have fond memories of Dad and the things they did together, but by the time I could remember family events, Dad was always very busy, and then of course he became ill, and family doings ceased. By the time I was eight, Bob was away to Dartmouth College. Two years later Dad became ill, and then there was December 7th.

The property adjoining the Lanikai house could be recognized by the windmill and the piping on the roof covered with glass which might have been viewed as an early ecological effort to save the planet and use natural heating for water, but no doubt it was done out of necessity. The utilities were adequate, but I'm sure with just two wires leading in from the poles, power was limited. Then again no heating was necessary. Our phone was the typical oak hand cranked rural phone, although we had a specific number at home in Manoa Valley. One counted the rings at Lanikai-two long and three short.

Week ends were often devoted to the familiar trek over the Pali, but the summers were spent primarily at Lanikai. Mother always said it was no vacation for her on the week ends, as beds had to be made, then stripped, the place had to be cleaned up, and meals had to be prepared. Meals were shared around an old dining room table that had seen better days, so had been painted black with orange trim with the chairs painted to match. Food was kept in the old refrigerator with the circular coils on top and the legs holding the unit about a foot off the floor. Once a mouse had found its way into the workings near the compressor and was discovered only after its decaying carcass prompted a disparate search. The stove too was a unique piece of technology. It too sat atop long slightly curved legs. The electric burners were of unglazed ceramic with

concentric grooves to hold the glowing coiled wire of the elements. Rising at the side of the burner surfaces was the oven with its pie shaped temperature display setting on the side. I don't remember any memorable meals that were prepared, but how many unappreciative kids do!

Playmates during the summer were by necessity different than my regular set of friends on Kakela Drive. One friend was Heaton "Skippy" Wren. His family had big bucks and he had all of the toys that he ever wanted. I don't think I really ever envied him, but when he had all of those toys, it was a prime place to play. And the family did use their maid's quarters. I was appalled at about age eight when "Skippy" called from the bathroom to their Chinese maid that he was ready to be wiped!

The Sinclair family on the other hand had interest for more than just me. Louisa was my age, Lydia was close to Marilyn and Myra's age, and Robin was the oldest, but I don't recall him joining in on the games and things that we did. We had treasure hunts, where one hidden note gave clues to where the next note might be found, and then on to the treasure which became somewhat anticlimactic, as it signaled that the game was over. "Two giant steps from the corner of the house, then ten baby steps to the flower bed and dig....." The Sinclairs had glass doors that led from their living room down a stair to the porch area. It fulfilled the need for a perfect stage. The stage hand opened the doors like velvet curtains to allow the players to make a grand entrance for a play. I don't recall my role, but I did get my finger caught in the closing of the "curtain" resulting in tears, and returning home to soak my hand in some rather characteristic pungent smelling Lysol, the antiseptic brew of the time, with its dark glass bottle and cork stoppered neck.

I never had a bicycle of my own until we moved to California, so sometimes I rode Myra's bike with its laced fan of strings from the back fender designed to keep one's skirt out of the spokes. And as I recall we rode some in the immediate area. Bob's bike was characteristic of the day with the two coil springs showing at the rear of the seat, and its wooden rims and glue on all-in-one tire and inner tube. It was also too hard to get on and off of, so a low tree branch helped some. Just ride up, grab the branch, and let the bike fall!

The beach itself was the characteristic creamy white of the coral that had been worn down over time and provided the pristine look so typical of the beaches of Hawaii. (It was a shock in later years, to see the dirty looking beaches of decomposed granite, typical in California.) Off shore from the beach was a coral reef completely covered by the ocean even at low tide. It broke the wave action resulting in a perfect place for swimming and boating, but surfing simply was a waste of time. Parents could feel safe when their children were playing, as the waves were small, there were few boats, and there were no rocks or coral growing in the area to cut feet and serve as a haven for the moray eel. There were however Portuguese man-o'-war, an innocuous looking member of the jelly fish family. They varied in size with the largest being the size of a

man's thumb, with its bubble shape pinched in at the bottom forming the blue jelly mass and long string of a tentacle. When we would see one floating on top of the water, we would run and get a stick to sweep under it catching the long lethal blue string. We would then deposit it on the beach out of harm's way. During the stormy season, there was a blue line of these little beasts washed up to the high tide line. If one was unlucky enough to encounter one of them in the water, it was enough to make a believer out of you. That long blue string left a stinging welt that was like fire. As a result of the encounter, the string would break up like so many bits of gelatin. And the bigger the man-o'-war the longer and bigger the string and the more likely that you would not see it in time. Once, while playing in the surf, one wrapped itself around me, thankfully avoiding my face. The pain was immediate, and I used the tried and true remedy of rubbing sand on the welt to remove the little bits of blue. I ran home to take a shower and get some soothing lotion on it as soon as possible. Even then I felt rather sick from the pain. The welts looked as if I had been whipped.

Along the reef line off shore were two very small sharply rising atolls, the Mokulua Islands. They were beyond a comfortable swimming distance, and access was typically by boat. One of the islands was just a single peak rising out of the water with no beaching area and little vegetation and mostly covered with bird nests. The other had two small humps forming the island, and had a small patch of sand on the beach side, which served as a landing area. There was a narrow trail leading around the island, but one needed to exercise care as the far side was open sea and some rather large waves crashed periodically across the trail. On one occasion as the family sans parents were traversing the trail, I was not watching the rhythm of the regular crashing of the waves. It was upon me before I realized it. I heard my sister Marilyn scream my name, but it was washing over me and the slippery rocks by that time. I managed to cling to the rocks, but every fingernail was broken, and my cherished signet ring which by this time fit only my little finger, was ripped from my hand to be lost to the angry waves and deep ocean. My return to the boat was over the top of the island in spite of the lack of trail and the thorny shrubs raking at my legs and bare feet. When we got back home, I fell asleep in a deserved rest.

I mentioned boating. There were no fiberglass boats, and the wooden planks of the typical family fishing boat had to be regularly caulked, puttied, and painted. My brother Bob was the fisherman, and most of that kind of work fell to him. To get the boat to the water over the soft sand took a few strong backs and two or three perfectly round log rollers which were alternately placed in front of the bow to serve as a continual surface on which the boat could roll forward. The removal of the boat from the water was the same process, except that the strong backs were replaced by a long rope leading from the car safely on the firm ground of the yard. Oars were always a good bet, and those who could, had a

Johnson or Evenrude outboard engine. The absolute top powered engine at that time was 25 horsepower. Bob's pride and joy was about three or five horse. It had to be started via a rope wound around the flywheel and speed was determined by a lever pulled from left to right. On top of the lever was a little button designated "stop". The shaft was not shrouded and tubing for water cooling ran parallel to the shaft. With the help of friend Charlie McWayne, Bob put a fitting on the tubing so a garden hose could be connected to flush out the salt water.

At the beginning of World War II, we hung on to the property but the trips became less frequent. The beach was now lined with an A-frame barbed wire fence. It was fortunate that the right-of-way was at one side of the property, because there was movable barrier there allowing access to the water. We had a gasoline C" card for the car, so that didn't present a big problem, but Dad had contracted Parkinson's disease and was able to do less and less. Occasionally one of the servicemen that attended the after church activities at Central Union or one of the fellows that came to the house for Sunday night supper would take us out to Lanikai, but that too deminished.

Bellows Field, an Army Air Force field was near by and of course the Naval Air Station at Kaneohe (sea planes) was just down the road, so it was easy for the old beach house to be rented. When one set of renters skipped town without paying the last month or two of rent, we went out to clean up the place. The first thing we noticed were all of the funny little black specks on Dad's light colored slacks as we walked across the yard..... fleas! They no doubt came from the dog that had used the couch to deliver her litter of pups. The kitchen screen door which was next to the stove looked like someone had strained greasy soup through it. Many dishes were broken and the salt shaker had cockroach eggs in it. The previously described "fragile" cesspool had been abused and the shower had backed up and had run out into the bathroom and into the living room. They had used towels to dam it up, as evidenced by the towels still in place and the partially dried "back up" on the floor. Similar abuse was seen throughout the house. Through the frustration and anger Mom took the lead and we started the hose on the yard to flood out the fleas. The furniture was all moved outside along with the ruined linoleum area rugs. It was then time to put the nozzle on the other hose and simply wash down the inside of the house. It was lucky that it was constructed to allow such a drastic cleaning procedure. On one other occasion when it was standing vacant, someone from the military broke in and had a party as evidenced by the messed up beds and abundance of empty liquor bottles. They were apparently concerned about their personal appearance on base, as they had used a torn strip of the linens to polish their shoes. This may have been the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The beach house was under siege from the inconsiderate. Dad was no longer able to practice medicine, and Mom was under a lot of strain, although I was not particularly aware of it at

the time. I don't know when it was decided that we move to California, but early in 1946 the Lanikai place was sold. (One can only speculate what the property might be worth on today's market!) On April 1, 1946 a tsunami hit Hawaii, coming down from Alaska with great force. One of my class mates at Punahou had her arm broken as the wave broke into her home through the glass doors facing the ocean and dragged her toward the yard as it receded. The beach house at Lanikai was knocked off its foundation and extensive damage was done in the area. We never went back.