

La Mariana Sailing Club

The Hideaway

The year was 1955. We were endowed with a revocable 30-day permit by the honorable Harbors Division. The place: Keehi Lagoon. The object: to develop a sailing club.

A vision of a beautiful yacht club was marred by the unkempt land before us. For two years the watchword was clean up. The magic question: How to build a yacht club with a shovel and rake.

Teaching at Kamehameha Schools helped financially toward the realization of this dream. In the interim, we lived in an office which Mr. Stubenberg, original owner of Keehi Dry Docks, so kindly rented us. We also bought our electricity and water from him. We commenced to build a clubhouse.

To our dismay, we learned that half of the land was submerged. But, Amelco needed a place to dump 1,008 truckloads of fill. And with rake and shovel, we created the much needed land. But the clubhouse was now aesthetically in the wrong place, so we moved it to the water edge.

Our followers consisted of 13 people, 13 boats, and the largest one 13 feet long. On a sunny Sunday afternoon, we banded together and decided the name was to be the La Mariana Sailing Club, the initial fee to be \$2.00, the monthly fee 50¢.

It was clear: we had to make a decision whether to continue the career as a teacher or accept the trials and tribulations of an entrepreneur.

It was the year 1958. We hoped with optimism for a lease, but nothing would deter the steadfast men from their steadfast stance.

One evening of that faithful year, we heard a crier cry. A tidal wave was nearing the Hawaiian Islands. Pandemonium prevailed.

Police barred the area. No one was allowed to cross Nimitz Highway and Sand Island Road. La Mariana was isolated.

It was nightfall and the moon was up!

With our backs to the lagoon, we dragged the small boats onto the shore and onto safety. The water was receding. Debris, dirt, and mud covered the floor of the lagoon. The shimmering light of the moon showed in crude crevices, mutilated mounds and gangrous gorges snarled twisted into a morbid, mangled mass. We heard the distant sound of water. Run! We had to run. Scooping up our animals and stumbling to the Dry Dock, we climbed up a ladder and sought safety on a boat, cushioned on a cradle high in the sky. We watched and waited. The clamor of the wave was deafening. Pushing and pulling, the gigantic gush of water was slowly, steadily and stealthily approaching. The wave, at least six feet high, descended mercifully on the shore. Water was everywhere. The land was inundated. Our yacht was an island.

Tired to exhaustion, we huddled, cats, dogs, and people, and prayed for dawn. The tidal wave had come and gone.

It was clean up time.

It was the year 1959. President Eisenhower's signature made Hawaii the 50th state. East descended on the west. Buildings sprung up like mushrooms on Oahu, no rhyme, no reason, no order, no beauty; just concrete masses – high, mighty and ugly.

Prostrate and pathetic, the rapacious rape of lovely Waikiki was complete.

It was the year 1962. Keehi Boat Harbor made its debut and Keehi Lagoon was introduced to the world; 500 slips available to 500 yachtsmen. Ala Wai was cleaned up. Boats that could or



would not berth in Ala Wai anchored in Keeki Lagoon. Keeki Lagoon was slowly and surely becoming the "in place" for yachts. La Mariana was blossoming forth into a bit of paradise.

It was the year 1968. A time of change. A finance company became the owner of Keeki Dry Dock followed by a California syndicate and then Amelco.

Amelco had great expectations, an ambition to build a complex with a beautiful marina housing 200 yachts. Construction commenced. We heard the clang, clang, clang of the pile driver. A forty-foot piling disappeared into the muck. The lagoon consumed all foreign matter. A sewer pipe was being contemplated. The cost: \$500,000. The idea was abandoned.

It was 1975. Concentration and contention was centered on the La Mariana created for Amelco. The thorn had to be plucked. La Mariana was taken to court and ordered to vacate the premises at the end of one year.

Incoherent and in shock, the fledgling steadied itself for the oncoming onslaught. "To be or not to be." Land for the house and water for the boats; that was the question. After scanning, searching, for months, a guardian angel at court came to the rescue. A strip of land just fifty yards from where La Mariana had been growing for 19 years was suggested.

What a Houdinean task was before us; an endless miracle to be performed. Permits for the new site had to be obtained. Rules and regulations of the Department of Transportation, Land and Natural Resources, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Environmental Impact, and the Corps of Engineers had to be met. All agencies had to be lulled and pacified. Time was running out. The last and final permits came before us on Thursday August 27. D-Day was Sunday, August 30, zero hour midnight. A Herculean effort was expelled and within three days we moved the club house, 20 docks, 30 boats, 83 palm trees, a monkey pod tree fifteen feet high, a shower tree eighteen feet high, flowering shrubs, plants, hedges, etc., etc.

It was the year 1978. We had a thirty-day revocable permit on a dump of a long and narrow strip of land, a junkyard, and a concrete slab four feet deep was its floor. No water. No electricity. God, what a revelation manifested itself. We could revive La Mariana!

The house was on stilts high in the sky. A ladder was used to reach it. No electricity; we used kerosene lamps. No water; we carried buckets from the ocean. We rented a hop toe, broke up the cement, made holes three feet deep filled them with top soil, and planted. Of the 83 palm trees, 71 survived. We rented a generator. The clubhouse was put together. Docks and boats were anchored. A stairway was built to reach our house. Hawaiian Electric installed electricity. The Board of Water Supply installed water. A metamorphosis took place. At the end of two years, La Mariana emerged strong and beautiful. The concrete junkyard was gradually being transformed into an oasis. At the end of a two-year work period, we had a party restricted to the workers who helped to build La Mariana. Governor Ariyoshi was a guest.

It was the year 1979. Harbors Division decided to lease our land at a public auction. After a 22-year month-to-month habitation, we could boast a thirty-five year lease.

Tremendous energy was exerted to build modern docks, to upgrade the entire facility. La Mariana quivered and quaked. Prices for berths soared to forbidden heights. The bar and snack bar gave a helping hand.

We have been struggling for 33 years.

Much aloha to you, La Mariana, for the sacrifices of the past, for the peace of the present, and for the glory of the future.

Annette La Mariana Nahinu

The Hideaway

~continued~

It was the year 1990; Japan's economy skyrocketed. Money was in abundance. A driving passion spurred the Japanese to buy, to convert, to modernize.

A new era was born. One by one going, going, gone were the glamorous, glorious restaurants that graced Hawaii in the 60's, 70's, 80's. A subtle change was enveloping Hawaii. The Aloha spirit was receding. The charm of Hawaii was disappearing. There had been no controlled action, no thought to the consequences which change would bring forth.

An opportunity arose. The beautiful discarded artifacts were purchased and placed with loving care on the walls, the building and the premises of La Mariana.

It was the year 1992, a well-mannered, soft-spoken Japanese man, representing a company in Japan, accosted La Mariana. The company wished to purchase the marina. He showed credentials, his affiliation with the company in Japan. All seemed in order. The offer to buy – 5 million – with an answer in the affirmative as soon as possible.

A heavy cloud hovered over La Mariana. Anxiety for its welfare prevailed. Thought came to mind. In the past, restaurants purchased by the Japanese were renovated, millions spent. And within a few months the restaurants closed. We were not interested in selling.

Approximately a month later, we received a formal letter from the Japanese company. They offered 6 million to purchase La Mariana, requesting a reply as soon as possible.

Bewitched and bewildered...many pros – many cons – raced through the mind... Keeki Marine Center, our neighbor, sold for 7 million. La Mariana did not possess a dry dock, but it did house a unique restaurant. Not interested in selling for 6 million.

Six weeks later, a special delivery letter from Japan. The offer – 7 million. What a dilemma! What to do! In each instance an added million. Nervous were the days, restless were the nights, and endless were the prayers. The days flew into weeks, the weeks into months. And suddenly, a certified letter from the Japanese company. A final offer – "7 million 800 thousand." A notation to respond within three days upon receipt of letter.

La Mariana succumbed. The attorney was called. The tale was told. He was astonished, congratulating profusely. But why the tears? A betrayal had been bespoken.

There were meetings, the attorney, the representative, and myself. Copies of bank records, all pertinent data as well as all correspondence with the Harbors Division were given to the company. An irrevocable trust was created. A deposit of \$400,000 was placed in escrow.

A meeting was called. Members and yachtsmen were notified La Mariana was being sold.

All was in readiness for the take over. The representative was due in Japan. I called and asked if we could meet before his departure. Some questions needed answers. On his way to the airport, he stopped at La Mariana.

I requested payment in American dollars, the full amount in a suitcase. Just like in the movies! I inquired if he could divulge the future of La Mariana. He indicated that the building inside would be completely renovated, with new doors, new walls, new floors. The interior would be refurbished, in the modern style with new modern tables, chairs, lamps, etc. New docks would be built, different style, more pleasing to the eye, more comfortable to the yachtsmen. What is not needed will be destroyed. My fear realized. My premonition finalized. La Mariana would be no more. But a glimmer of hope glittered. I asked if it were possible to inherit the unwanted items. Breathing abated. Yes, I heard, you can have it all. Breathing resumed. To be given the essence of La Mariana and seven million eight hundred thousand, could such a possibility be possible?

I thanked the representative and wished him a safe journey. He assured me that the deal would be consummated within two months, that he would return to Hawaii with all the papers signed, and all papers to be signed and 7 million 8 hundred thousand in American dollars in a suitcase.

There was much to do. Thoughts to be contemplated. Ideas to be materialized. An area was needed – land for the buildings, water for the yachts. An experience of 21 years ago to be repeated. A new home for the buildings, furniture, docks, yachts, plants, etc., etc... I shuddered as I recalled the agonizing presence of the move 22 years prior. But it would not be as difficult – 7 million eight hundred thousand should help!

I hurried to the Harbors Division. Related all that had occurred. Go – look – find, I was told. The search began. One Month – then two- nothing available. We slipped into the third month – and then, suddenly unexpectedly, there it was – land and water – a secluded protected area – just past the bridge – perfect for La Mariana.

Three months elapsed. All was quiet on the Eastern front. No word. We called Japan. The banks were not cooperating. Time was needed. It was Christmas. We had a call. The banks were unable to lend any money. There was no money.

The battle not begun – was concluded. Much to do about nothing! The Japanese requested the \$400,000 placed in escrow. The court decided in the affirmative for La Mariana.

La Mariana survived. We have been struggling for 37 years. Much aloha to you, La Mariana and God Bless!

Annette La Mariana Nafinu

The Hideaway

~continued~

It was the year 1997. The military supportive to the economy of Hawaii had departed. The sugar and pineapple industry important to the welfare was depleted. The tourist trade which brought good revenue was deserted. Hawaii was in the throes of a deep depression.

La Mariana shivered and shook. Precautions were taken to eliminate unnecessary expenses. Hours were cut. The salary of the president was abolished.

The Tahitian Lanai located in the Waikikian Hotel opposite the Ilikai was destined to close in December 1997. It was the last of the beautiful restaurants to be sacrificed.

The famous singers and maestro Ron who had been filling the halls and the walls of the Tahitian Lanai for many years with beautiful music needed a home. An interested and devoted lady, who loved the La Mariana and who loved the singers announced that she wished to have a cocktail and Pupu party, hoping to thus produce a merger between singers and La Mariana.

The day of the party arrived. It was a tremendous success. The cash register kept clicking continuously. It was heavenly music! Receipts at the end of the evening were triple the usual amount. What a blessing was taking place.

At the end of the evening, Ron, the maestro, was approached. "Could he come to La Mariana every Friday night." He stated he was tired, however he would come to La Mariana to play the following Friday.

On the following Friday, Ron was again questioned. His retort was the same. He was tired, but he would come the following Friday. A new line of attack was needed and pursued. A desperate plea was made to several singers close to Ron, to obtain an affirmative answer. It worked!

Ron came to the office. There are several stipulations, which must be adhered to if I am to play at La Mariana, he said.

- 1) The piano needs to be moved. Granted!*
- 2) The piano needs to be tuned every month. Granted!*
- 3) The sound system needs to be upgraded. Granted!*
- 4) Payment for services at each session. Granted!*

"If these requirements meet with your approval, I will come every Friday and Saturday night and play at La Mariana from 9:00 PM to midnight." "Should an agreement be signed?" I questioned. "No, a handshake will suffice." Thus a beautiful friendship was born.

La Mariana survived. We have been struggling for 45 years. Much aloha and God Bless.

Annette La Mariana Nafinu