

## Mariann's Top Reasons to Love a Maui Christmas Season:

- Rummage sales continue in the 80-degree weather!!! (Read: Inexpensive Christmas gifts.)
- I've never broken my wrist while crashing into a wave while surfing. (It's much softer than crashing into a snow bank while tobogganing.)
- Can you say "outdoor Christmas brunch, dinner, and late-night snack?"
- The antifreeze in my car helps me feel at home when I miss the comforts of a Wisconsin Christmas...

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**OHANA**: Hawaiian for family. Yet it means so much more than what is written in most Hawaiian dictionaries: family. In Hawaii, when a person speaks of "ohana", he or she is referring to all those people that are an intricately important component of the person he or she has become.

# MARIANN'S OHANA LEWNER

## Christmas in the Barn...I mean Cannery

Christmas approaches on Maui, and we all began to wonder what would happen with our Christmas Eve service. The Dream Team met in early November and decided that we'd be doing a live nativity this year.

I was familiar with plenty of those, growing up at my church, Norway Lutheran, in Wisconsin. We'd freeze our tails off dressed in robes, bed sheets, and other household items while someone read the story. How could it be that different on Maui?

After our first rehearsal, it was abundantly clear to me that this would really be a different story. One for the people on Maui.

In preparation for the service, I got to pull out some of my old-school rock climbing harness creation skills. We had to make the angel fly somehow!

As the night drew near, the sanctuary filled up with a large supply of straw, a barn-like structure, an inn, and a silver star that shown brightly from a long ways away. The centerpiece was the 25-foot Norfolk Pine Christmas tree. You know Charlie Brown? Similar to that, but big. Really big.

On the night of the performance, the church filled up with people; God brought many who had never set foot in our place before. It also filled with wise men, Mary &



Joseph, chickens, a donkey, and a herd of surf short-clad shepherds.

For the first time, so many people got to experience the meaning of Christmas in ways that meant something to them.

What would it be like to be going along in your everyday life, waiting for the next set of waves to come in, when tons of angels appear to you and tell you about this amazing thing—a baby being born in a—manger!?

If something as awesome and out of the everyday as angels tells

you, you check it out!

I played one of those shepherds, and it really made me think about it. What would I be thinking if the

next time I was out surfing at Launiupoko, it happened? I'd be



telling everyone (they'd think I was trippin'), and wouldn't be able to believe it.

Then when I actually found a baby in a manger?!? How could it not be true. Things like that just don't happen everyday, you know?

Then gazing at the face of Mary and Joseph, imagining their amazement and possible disbelief left me temporarily speechless.



Our amazing God dropped in as a human. Face it, humanity isn't all that great all the time. And especially if you're used to being God. No comparison. I'd choose being God in heaven any day. He didn't.

## How do you know when it's Christmas on Maui?



After spending two Christmases here, I took a moment to compile the answers that I've gotten from many long-time residents over the

past 16 months:

Damien Soliven (27, Maui-born): It rains a lot.

Johnny Voxland (Windsurfer and Surfer, Minnesota-born): We get our white Christmas. It's the white that forms on the surf when the huge northwest swells come in every winter.

Then I realized that I only had their

two answers, along with my personal experience.

For me, it means wearing long pants for many weeks straight, flooding in the church sanctuary from the winter storms (always an adventure), a peculiar display of a 15-foot Grinch on the lanai (porch) on my street, and a feeling of joy, love, and becoming part of the church family at every turn for meals, celebrations, movie nights, and quiet times together.



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"Those who once stood in the presence of God and God's people, and made covenants with one another are losing their love for each other, because they have lost their relationship with the Lord."

-Prakash Yesudian, *Unless the Lord Builds*

NOTABLE QUOTABLE

### Christmas on the Street, Stage, and in a Stable. Fo' real, this time...

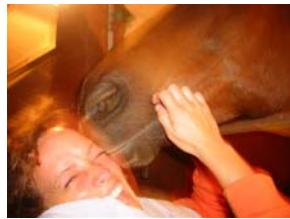
It sure is great to reflect back on the insanity of the Christmas season with the perspective of "It's passed. It's finished!"

So, that allows me to finally get this next Ohana Letter out to the masses!

We loaded up a school bus one Friday night and attacked the Haiku town vicinity with our voices. The attacking was in an uplifting, enjoyable way, though. We walked through the streets and sang to anyone who would listen,

handing out candy canes that told the true story of the original candy cane. If you get the chance, check it out sometime at: [www.realcandycanestory.com](http://www.realcandycanestory.com).

That Sunday evening in place of the weekly movie night, the Pacific Gate



Horse Attack In the Stable



Church on a Bus

troupe of Covenant Players theatrical ministries performed at our church. After presenting around 6 short plays, we were all confronted with the realities of what Christmas really is about. Jesus and His people. His love, the love that we can show to everyone.

The troupe of 3 people travel from show to show, living by faith that God will provide what they need to live. Food, shelter, clothing, and ministry supplies. Never once had He been

unfaithful to this group of one married couple (who hasn't had an apartment or house since they've been married), and a woman from Poland. They are three individuals I will never forget. Jefta and I shared a dinner with them before the performance that will take much effort to ever surpass in entertainment value...

After our Christmas Eve service, the Hallsten family, the Engles, Hannah Robertson, John Buns, Jefta, and I all ventured out to a local stable for a retelling of the Christmas story from Mary's perspective. The night was finished off with singing, sharing what we were each thankful for, and a good time of reflection.

Caroling 2003



"This was not surprising, given that I had taken only one shower at an indoor shower in the previous month."

### Another day, another hair trauma solved!

For any of you who have been around me for longer than a week at a time, you know the hair difficulties I've been through. In search of the perfect, natural-appearing, healthy, head of curls, my mom has purchased for me nearly every shampoo, conditioner, and other frizzy-hair controlling product available to humanity.

After 25 years of work, I had settled on the best chemically-enhanced solution available, providing only mediocre results... until Maui.

Naturally curly hair combined with the humid, windy weather in Haiku and as many surf escapades crammed into a week as possible, results in unhappy trestles of frizzed-out, golden-brown locks, and using more shampoo than your average beaver can shake a stick

at. One fateful Sunday afternoon, as I headed to the outdoor showers at the end of an exciting Launiupoko surf session, I realized I had run out of



shampoo and conditioner a few days before. This was

not surprising, given that I had taken only one shower at an indoor shower in the previous month. How can you resist free luxuries in life



like showering with the backdrop of a sunset over the Pacific Ocean and the island of Lana'i?

So, I rinsed the saltwater from my board shorts and the rest of my body and gave my hair a thorough soap-less washing. I dug through my bag of rash guards, sunscreen, beach towel, canned sausage links, and peanut butter, finding a can of curl-specific mousse.

I put in a small amount in my hair, then we were off to McDonald's for a post-surf rendezvous.

Before we left, I headed to the bathroom to change out of my still-wet swimsuit, and caught a glimpse of my hair in the mirror. "That's the best your hair has ever looked," is what Nicole told me today.

LITTLE-KNOWN FACT:

The state fish of Hawai'i is the humu-humunukunukuapua'a.

Try saying that five times fast!

### No Whitewater This Month!

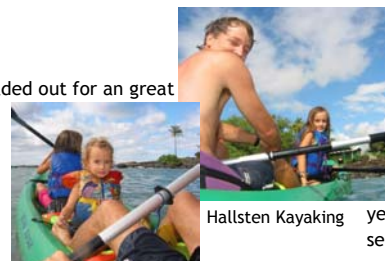
Kayaking in December had a bit of a mellow meaning to it, especially in comparison to last month's escapade!



The Hallsten Family, John Buns,

Jefta, and I all headed out for an great relaxing day of kayaking one Monday afternoon.

I only went out once, but had a



Hallsten Kayaking

great time indulging in the fine photographing opportunity of my waterproof digital case. (Last year's birthday present!)

## You Take the High Road, and I'll Take the Hana Highway. (And I couldn't think of a better title...)

I just had the greatest day I've had in a long time. I was reminded this Monday how the company that you are with can completely make or break your



I climbed a tree and said, "look up"...

Monday, January 5, five of us piled into John Buns car and headed out to Hana. The crew involved in this day long escapade was John Buns (in from California 3 weeks ago to start a new recovery ministry at our church), Michelle (in from California this week to start esthetician school and stay at my place until she finds a place of her own), Jefta, Tobias (Jefta's friend visiting from Holland), and me.

The day started with a good drive through many of the turns and turns and turns of the road, winding past beautiful waterfall after beautiful

waterfall.

Our first stop along the way was some great waterfall jumping. John, Jefta, and I took an invigorating 25-foot plunge, to the camera-snapping delight of all of the tourists watching below. I was just happy that my body didn't lose feeling from the insanely cold temperature I submersed myself in over and over again!

We stopped at the point in Nahiku, where Tobias experienced his first "Wow, that was a big wave that drenched me and almost pulled me in" experience and Jefta got back to his Tarzan roots while making elephant calls from 50-feet up in a tree overlooking the ocean.

We made a stop at the black sand beach of

Waianapanapa State Park for some snorkeling. Then John



Ready to jump...

took us on a hike the hot spring-fed pools.



Maui-kine Lunchtime

Little did Jefta and Tobias realize until after they jumped in the 50 degree water that there are, indeed, no hot springs on Maui. The expressions on the two of their faces when they came up for warm air is something I will never forget.

After a good lunch at The Seven Pools at Oheo, we continued our way around Haleakala, through my favorite scenery on the island. Much time was had for heated conversations covering a wide range of topics, such as: eyeballs from fish heads, displaying fruits of the spirit, Dutch versus American weddings, how to lead worship music not using a guitar, Dutch "perceptions" of Americans, and many, many more...

We made the traditional stop at Johnny V's property for a bathroom break, and were on our way back to the "civilized" part of the island. A beautifully fun and laughter-filled day. A gift from God after many weeks of pressing craziness. Mmm...

"Wow, that was a big wave that drenched me and almost pulled me in" experience...

## Livin' Large. And Cold. "Haleakala, here we come."

The day before we embarked on the journey to Hana, the 5 of us and Frank journeyed the quickest elevation change from sea level to 13,000 feet anywhere on earth. We summited Haleakala in John Buns' car.

We arrived at the top of the volcano, all six of us in one car—I learned a lot about my stubbornness and other's generous self-sacrifice to cope with it that day.

We began a hike into the volcano (a beautiful landscape bearing strong resemblance to Mars) that would prove to be one of the coldest experiences I've had since teaching 6 hours of snowboarding in a blizzard at SpringHill. 40-degrees with a wind chill of



about 20-degrees combined with Maui clothing and mid-Pacific blood means cold!

The beauty of God's hand on that landscape and our companions created memories to last a lifetime!



Jefta sacrifices sanity for the good of the group.



## The Future Unfolds: "Alpha Hour", 20-Somethings, Crown Ministries

Things continue pressing on. God just keeps on putting things up and happening here on Maui.

The 20-Somethings are getting together on January 15 to talk about what we can do for God in our church. I'm so stoked about this because there are so many of us who have great ideas for moving God forward here, and we make up a good portion of the church body. The church leadership wants us to be in leadership. Make it happen, God!

The "Alpha Hour," a new early, intimate service, is going to be starting mid-February. The Alpha Hour is designed to bless those who serve in the Cornerstone Construction Company (CCC) during the second, larger, full Celebration! service. Talk about logistics needed to make that happen. It's a logistical nightmare that I can't wait to help make happen!

Then there's Crown Ministries, starting on January 18. We're going to be going through financial responsibility

as the Bible defines it over a 12-week time span. Pastor Brent will be teaching on it every Sunday, we'll be discussing practical life applications each mid-week MiniChurch, and be watching a wonderful acting out of each week's topic by the Lolo family (in Hawai'ian it means a playful version of crazy), a tourist couple visiting the island played by my good friends Nicole and Riki Roberts.

God, give us strength and endurance to push through!

**Information on any topic can be obtained (for a small price, cookies work well...) from the author at: MARIANN OLSON**

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[www.mariann.net](http://www.mariann.net)

*It's always far easier to give everything to God when my definition of everything doesn't quite match Webster's...*

-Mariann's Thoughts in Progress  
December, 2003

**God's Love is like a Ball of Yarn...**  
(Mariann's ramblings while leading worship)

*Your love, oh Lord, reaches to the heavens. Your faithfulness stretches to the sky.*

We journey up Haleakala to see amazing beauty, to see the heavens at their finest. Yet we can never reach them, no matter how high we climb.

Yet God is big enough that His love reaches to the heavens. My mind cannot grasp how big anything

needs to be to reach the unreachable—the heavens. Just how much love is that?

I like to picture a ball of yarn. Now make it the biggest ball of yarn that you can imagine. Take that biggest ball of yarn that you can imagine and multiply it by five hundred and one trillion, six hundred thirty-eight million, 48 thousand, 4 hundred and eighty four times.



You got it? That's a big ball of yarn. That's not even one millionth of the size of God's love for us.

That is a big ball of yarn...but an even bigger love of our God for us!

[Yarn illustration taken from an unnamed SpringHiller, 2003.]

**Please Pray For:**

Clarity and direction as myself and the rest of leadership figure out the direction of my role.

Manpower for the SCET Project.

U.S. Immigration will extend Jefta's visa through the SCET project in April.

Provision of finances to repay my various areas of debt.

Protection of our church.

Protection for the people of Maui as the year draws to a close, and holiday celebrations continue.

Success of for the new Recovery Ministry starting on January 5!

Wisdom for the Board at their Jan 9-10 retreat.

**Praise God! AKA: Look what God did!**

Provided a donkey for the Christmas production!

Brought many people to each of the Christmas events here on Maui.

The joy of new Kihei friends who surf.

Killer bass lessons.

God's joy overflowing in me has returned!

God provided much needed funds yet again, in the nick of time.

God giving passion to those who follow Him.

Teaching me to lead worship!

**Highlight on The Roberts': Riki and Nicole**

How do they fit into my life?

Nicole is one of my closest friends on the island. We were roommates for the 9 months before she and Riki got married. She's the one who taught me how to love music, play music, be inspired to play music, and is the girl I know I can always go to for a my-aged, female, Godly perspective on anything. And to top it off, she understands. Talk about a rare commodity!

Riki is her husband, and one of the most dedicated to following Jesus guys I've ever met. He's a regular supporter of me leading worship, playing the drums. He's always been a great sounding board for my thoughts on guy interests, and in turn, keeping secrets of things that are most difficult to keep secret... He also has a mind passionately articulate at telling people why Jesus is the one way, and all other ways are untrue. He's a preacher.

Their children are **Boot** (6-month

old pit bull) and **Zeke** (4-month old rottweiler).

How did we meet?

I first met Riki and Nicole at Safeway grocery store just 2 hours after my plane landed on Maui a year and a half ago. They were shopping for salmon to cook at a 20-something BBQ that I would meet many of my soon-to-be closest friends at...

What's my favorite Roberts moment?

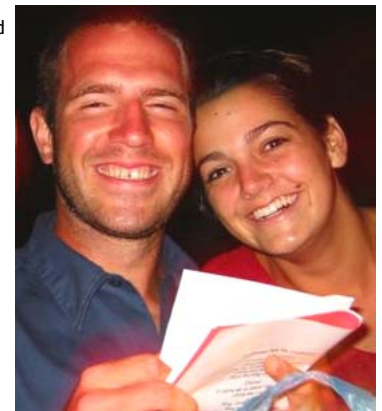
Endless hours of conversation with Riki standing on the outside of the screen door of our house. (Guys weren't allowed in the church housing that me, Wendy, and Nicole lived in.) I almost didn't recognize him without wire mesh in front of his face.

How long have they lived on Maui?

Riki: 3 years. Nicole: 2 years.

Where did they grow up?

Riki: Reno, Nevada.



Riki and Nicole enjoy a few Christmas carols together.

Nicole: Sonoma County, California.

My final words:

I have never seen a young couple so dedicated to God and allowing Him to direct every single aspect of their lives. They're an inspiration to me of how good a marriage can be if God is at the center!