

Hotels, local style can't coexist on North Shore

Years from now, "Kahuku Blues" will play on the radio and we'll have to explain to the keiki why the singer sounds so sad.

The proper term for "five hotels" is "resort development." Anyone who thinks the North Shore can turn into a resort development and somehow retain its country charm needs to take a trip to Maui.

It is the unlearned lesson of Mākena all over again.

Yes, the sprawl of hotels into Mākena brought jobs and public parking and beach access. But what kind of jobs? Changing Britney Spears' bed linens? Who cradles those aspirations for their children's future?

As for public parking at formerly remote beaches, the lots are packed with tourists' rental cars. There's no room for the ambulance to park when the call goes out to pick up Bertha from Boise who twisted her ankle while walking across the lava rocks.

The beaches are covered with tour groups who show up in 18-passenger vans. The parking lot is crammed with convertibles and shiny SUVs.



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Gone are the days of packing up the camping equipment in Daddy's old truck for a long weekend of fishing and swimming with the 'ohana under the kiawe trees. It's "MTV Beach Party" out there. It's "Blue Crush." It's "Weekend at Bernie's."

When resorts put in public beach parking, what they're really doing is controlling beach access, as out by Ihilani. To spend a Saturday at one of the lagoons, a local family has to plan ahead and get there early to beat out other local families. Paving a parking lot for 18 cars, as called for in the Turtle Bay plan, serves to limit the number of local folks on the beach.

Has the development of Mākena made any local per-

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son's life truly better?

It made money for hoteliers.

It has been enjoyed by wealthy tourists.

Local folks who two generations ago would have worked in the sugar fields have found work in the field of hospitality. They still don't often taste the sweetness of their hard labor, but every once in a while, one rises up to the level of luna.

But the promise of service jobs, particularly in a college town like the North Shore, is

like the whisper of the serpent. Brigham Young University-Hawai'i isn't graduating dish washers and bed-turners. Will executives be recruited from the community? Where are all those workers to service 3,000 rooms going to live?

We already gave up Waikiki to the constant carnival of tourism. Why do the same thing on a rare unspoiled corner of the island?

As Liko Martin wrote about another country community two decades ago,

"All of your dreams.

Sometimes it just seems

That I'm just along for the ride ..."

The resort developers come

in with money and promises and lawyers and papers, and local people are pushed along and plowed under by progress. Some ride.

The truth about beachside resort development in Hawai'i is that it's like plastic surgery. Sometimes it turns out flashy, even pretty. Sometimes it's nightmarish and grotesque. But always, it is artificial and permanent, and the natural beauty of what once was can never be recovered.

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