"And the strange thing was he had never loved her more than in that moment, because at that moment she had become himself."
--- James Jones, From Here to Eternity

Nine weeks have passed since we arrived on Kauai. Given that most of those 63 days have been spent sheltering in-place alone in a small condo in the middle of the Pacific Ocean nearly 2,500 miles from home, that time can feel like an eternity.

Our primary reason for coming to the island is to see our daughter and two grandchildren, ages 1 and 9, to help while our daughter works and to enjoy the little ones as grandparents do. These years are precious and not to be missed. Every contact -- grandchild to grandparent and back again -- ties us closer, produces a memory for life. Hawaiian culture calls it legacy.

Eternity, for us, has been not touching our grandchildren, not seeing them in-person, yet residing so close -- 10 miles down the road. We share the same Trade Winds and tropical island flow. But it hurts when we think about those little smiles and innocent eyes of wonder that we're missing up close. Social Distance has anti-social limits. That eternity of isolation and distance has been counterbalanced by the island itself. The gentle sway and sudden cloud bursts are never dull. The sudden surprises of flowers bursting daily with color and fragrances that perfume the tropical air stop us in our tracks. Those tracks are often footprints. We walk in soft sand at Hanalei Bay. We never wear socks. We wear flips-flops that locals call slippahs.
We step wide of fellow walkers and exchange hand waves. We wear masks when we buy tools at Ace Hardware or groceries at Foodland Market in Princeville. We wash our hands afterwards in temporary sinks outside of the buildings. I turn off the water with my elbow to avoid touching the knob with a clean hand.

I feel ridiculous doing that but no one bats an eye.

We miss our dog Frida back home. House-sitters occupy our house in Santa Cruz. They are caring for our loyal German Shepherd who must wonder where we are. We were supposed to be gone six weeks but our flight home in mid-April was canceled. Our house-sitters, Vera and Joe, whom we met online, come from Barbados, which has been under quarantine with no incoming flights.

They are stuck in our house. We hardly know them. Sheltering has shut down the world, turned things around. Yet business continues online for Vera who now works virtually from our place in Santa Cruz. Barbara meets with her Santa Cruz associates in Zoom meetings from Kauai.

Virtual life is good. Real life is lonely. The island setting is magnificent.

Barbara and I have discovered each other again. Stuck together in a condo for weeks on end we either accept our limitations and idiosyncrasies, or kill each other. An exaggeration, of course, but a peek at the daily news reveals worse.

We have probably seen our three daughters and their families more in the past four weeks than we’ve seen them in the past year -- altogether as a family -- on screen. We share and we listen. It’s especially fun to hear our California grandchildren tell us what they’re up to. They miss their friends, but find stuff to do, like ride their bikes, build backyard forts and learn cool dance moves.

Recently, I was thinking about our good fortune to be here. We have made friends, but have not been able to visit as freely as we like. My memoir writing group came to mind, since we meet weekly by Zoom. Then I realized that they are in their homes in Santa Cruz, not on Kauai. I had temporarily fooled myself, believing they were here.

These are weird times. We count our many blessings. We have friends and family. Our kids are healthy and employed. This seems like a miracle when you watch the news.

There’s good news on Kauai. Today marks 28 days, two incubation periods, without a new Covid case on the island, which has been shut down for weeks.

Yesterday, feeling a little braver, perhaps more foolish, and aching to see our Kauai family in person, we drove to Anahola to deliver a package to our daughter Isabel Bryna and see our grandchildren, Viva and Mystiko. Upon arrival we tip-toed around each other, performing an odd separation ritual.
To prevent physical touching, Viva and Barbara exchanged gifts by placing little packages for each other on a rock. We're getting closer, inch-by-inch, to making skin-to-skin contact and closing the eternal gap of separation.

Disclaimer and Waiver Re: Posted Multimedia Content

The information contained in the posted multimedia content including, but not limited to video, audio, images, text, animation, and links to other websites (collectively, the "Shared Content") represents the views and opinions of the original creators of such Shared Content and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the City of Santa Cruz (the "City"). The mere appearance of Shared Content on this website does not constitute an endorsement by the City or its affiliates of such Content.

The Shared Content has been made available for informational and educational purposes only. Although the information contained in the Shared Content has been produced and processed from sources believed to be reliable, the City does not make any representation or warranties with respect to the accuracy, applicability, fitness for a particular purpose, or that the Shared Content is without defects or is error-free. The City does not warrant the performance, effectiveness or applicability of any sites listed or linked to in any Shared Content.

The Shared Content is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice. By the use of the Shared Content, you (User) solely assumes any all associated risks, both known or unknown. User agrees not to assert any claim, institute any suit or other legal process against the City, its officers, officials, employees, or agents for injury, death, or damage resulting from or in any way related to use of the Shared Content.

The City, its officials, officers, employees and agents hereby disclaim any and all responsibility or liability to any party for any direct, indirect, implied, punitive, special, incidental or other consequential damages arising directly or indirectly from any use of the Shared Content, which is provided as is, and without any warranties. City makes no representations relating to the rights, permissions and authorizations in providing User with the Shared Content, including no warranties of non-infringement. City does not grant User any right, title, or interest, express or implied, in any way related to the Shared Content or its use.

Interested in writing your own submission? Go to cityofsantacruz.com/virtualrecreation