

HAWAII

SURVIVING IN PARADISE (AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES LINDBLAD)

BY MIKE WHITLOCK

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a proclamation admitting Hawaii into the Union as the fiftieth state on August 21, 1959. “We will wish for her prosperity, security, and happiness.” said the 34th U.S. President.

This fiftieth state sits five hours by air off the coast of California. Once upon a time you could smell the thick aroma of sugar cane immediately upon deplaning. While sugar cane may be gone, the sunshine and warm breezes is a permanent fixture of this collection of tropical islands. With an average year round temperature of 81 degrees, the Hawaiian Islands are certainly among the elite group of tropical paradises. The ocean is often a warm 74 degrees with cool trade winds. It’s a wonder anyone ever leaves the beach.

Like with most places, tropical or not, crime exists and Hawaii is no exception. Jim Lindblad owner of A-1 Bail Bonds in Honolulu has been servicing the Hawaiian Islands for more than 30 years.

We caught up with Jim via telephone and email at his office in Honolulu. Jim unabashedly describes the gorgeous weather he will be enjoying on yet another day on the island of Oahu. I on the other hand was looking out my office window in Indianapolis watching geese walk gingerly across an ice covered pond. Expedia.com was showing \$383.00 round trip airfare to Honolulu if I left that weekend. Not going to happen.

Jim was kind enough to come in out of the warm sun to speak with me about writing bail in this tropical paradise.

ASC: How did you get started in the bail bond business?

JL: My first company in 1976 was Wilshire through general agent Jay MacIntosh. I then moved to Hawaii 1980 and began writing for Ideal Insurance through Allied Fidelity Insurance Company and that was the beginning of my friendship and business relationship with Jack Whitlock.

ASC: When did you and Jack first meet face to face?

JL: I first met Jack when he came to my office in Honolulu in 1984. He brought his family over for a vacation on Maui. Jack met at my office on the big island where he conducted a thorough audit of my bail records. I learned a lot about auditing that day.

ASC: What is your history with the island of Hawaii?

JL: I was born in Honolulu and attended Saint Luke High School, a Hawaii School with a 150 year tradition of Marianist education. My two sons also attended and graduated from Saint Luke. My son Scott works with me in the bail office.

ASC: Did you have family on the island during Japan’s attack of Pearl Harbor? My mother grew up here and my father worked in the navy yard. In fact my grandfather George Rowland Scott was one of the few superintendents of the Pearl Harbor Shipyard. My mother, auntie and grandparents were living in Pearl Harbor when it was bombed on December 7, 1941. Ordinance/spent shells hit the roof of their home. My father was a pilot in the Air Force having left the family farm in Minnesota to enlist.

ASC: How do you think writing bail in Hawaii defers from writing on the mainland?

JL: The short answer is writing bail in Hawaii is substantially similar to any place else. Defendants miss court dates just as often as everywhere else and for many of the same reasons. Defendants can get on a plane or hide out and many times defendants simply forget to attend court. Bail agents still want bond collateral and traditional underwriting skills are required to ensure success.

ASC: Are you able to apprehend your own fugitives or does that require a private investigator or recovery agent license?

JL: For many years I apprehended my own fugitives and sometimes still do. Recently I rely on professionals but no license is required.

ASC: What prompted you to bring your son into the business?

JL: My son Scott was trained and licensed by the best bail agent in Las Vegas, Coach Elton Ebarb. Scott worked hard training under Coach Ebarb’s watchful eye and it was only the coincidence of my Honolulu office adding staff that I decided to offer the position, with great hesitancy, but Scott has brought much to the table and has helped us. Having grown up in Honolulu, Scott understands our local market and

Scott brought sound underwriting skills with him thanks to his two years of experience working for Aardvark Bail in Las Vegas.

ASC: Would you ever consider moving back to the mainland?

JL: I have considered moving to the mainland as I think many others living in Hawaii frequently do, but I enjoy working at my Honolulu office and it would be difficult for me to leave the business world.

ASC: How much longer do you intend to write bail?

JL: Like most bail agents I think I will ultimately just fade away as retirement in my view would be harder than working. At one point I envisioned myself working until age 90 like my mentor Joe Lacy of Seattle, Washington. I can still see Joe standing in his office, white shirt and tie, looking out over his office staff, talking bail and happy to the end. My reality is that I will likely end it where I began and that is in briefcase mode, taking calls other bond agents don't want late at night and tending to my very loyal attorney referral customer base.

ASC: How has your experience been writing for American Surety?

JL: American brings great depth and experience to bail agents in Hawaii. Family owned/run businesses bring personal service and understanding of the special needs required of bail agents that cannot be matched. Above all American brings consistency to the bail agent. You know you will always get great service with American staffers and if you make a mistake and it is explained, American will work with you to resolve any issue.