**MY DREAM VACATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

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I had a dream. I dreamt I was in a place of unimaginable tropical beauty. The sky was the clearest blue. It was limitless. When it met the crystal water on the horizon, I thought I would be able to see forever. I heard the laughter of children playing on the diamond granules of sandy beach. The intense and vivid colors of the local flowers stood in blinding contrast to the aquatic splendor before me. The food prepared for us was fresh and delicious beyond anything I ever tasted. And then I woke up.

Yes. I dreamed I was in Hawaii and when I woke up, I knew that somehow I was going to make this dream come true. The **good** news is that I have a younger brother in the military and he and his wife are stationed on the Big Island. The **bad** news? I'm not from the “**world travelers.**” I'm not even from the “**hemisphere travelers!**” (**Wait for the laugh**). It's not like I just sit at home. I've been to Canada. I go to Florida. I've visited my daughter in Oakland California, but you know what I realized? Those trips all had one thing in common. **THE PLANE RIDE**. Oh… that is **NOT** my “cup of tea.” Let’s face it, I travel when I have to… as long as that plane doesn't have to fly over a **VERY LARGE** body of water! Since no one has yet discovered how to get to Hawaii from Atlanta **WITHOUT** flying over water, I knew I had to face my challenges. That dream invaded my curiosity and my heart and it wasn't leaving. It was time to confront my fears.

So much has been said about the beauty and majesty of Hawaii. Mark Twain said that it's “The loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean.” Don Ho, Hawaii’s most famous spokesman, proudly said, “I believe Hawaii is the most precious jewel in the world.” Others have said that it is the “island of big dreams for both islanders and guests. Those dreams born in paradise can, indeed, come true.” My brother said, “Why don't you visit while we are still stationed here. You will only have to pay for the plane ticket and we would love to see you.” I was convinced I had to overcome my fear.

I thought about planning my “dream” trip for a while. One thing I realized was that in the beginning of this year,I did a lot of traveling to Florida…. For **FUNERALS**. Life is short. Fear limits us. People travel every day. I found the strength within myself to conquer my limitations and considerations. I was ready to face the **beast**…. The nine and a half hour plane ride. (**Wait for the laugh**). I packed my snacks. I had my reading materials. I made sure I had whatever I needed to support me through the journey. On June \_\_\_\_\_\_, I boarded the plane.

True to schedule, almost ten hours later, I landed at the airport…**YES**. I survived! (**Wait for the laugh**). I was so happy to see my brother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and sister-in-law,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and from the minute my feet touched the ground, I felt welcomed as never before. The scenery was breathtaking. The air was perfumed with the heady aroma of plumeria, gardenias, and sea breezes (**If you smelled other things, mention those instead**). (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) You know how so many air fresheners and candles are named “Hawaiian Breeze?” I have to confess… real life smelled better! (**and wait for the laugh**).

I spent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ days visiting Hawaii and each day brought new discoveries and more proof that I was smart to overcome my considerations. We visited some beautiful beaches including the world famous Waikiki. We passed by the military base where President Obama would land when he would go to visit his childhood home. We took tours and trips and learned all about what a very special place I had the great good fortune to visit. The flowers and the beaches were only the beginning. When was the last time **YOU** saw wild pineapples growing on the side of the road? How many of you have witnessed the majesty of a volcano up close? Did you know there are practically no snakes on the island because the mongoose eats them? There was so much to absorb… I couldn't stop taking pictures and gasping in wonder at all I was seeing and learning, especially the natural beauty that surrounded me like a warm, welcoming embrace.

Everywhere I turned there was a friendly face and a kind expression of “Aloha,” and I learned other Hawaiian phrases as well. Of course, “**ALOHA**” means “hello.” It is the expression of unconditional love and the sharing of the spirit. “**OHANA**” connects us. It distinguishes those who are family.”**KÄKOU**” indicates communication and that “we are all in this together,” and “**HO’OMAU**” teaches us perseverance. This word reminds us to never give up.

Ho’omau is the word that means the most to me. It is a description of what I had to do in order to live my dream vacation. It’s the word that reminds me that when we're willing to step out beyond our comfort zone… when we are strong enough to trust ourselves…. When we are interested enough to explore new adventures, gifts abound. I love my home, my friends, my family, and my activities here in Atlanta. Now I can say I've explored other places, and that is a true gift.

There is one more Hawaiian expression I would like to share with you: “**MAHALO**.” I read that the meaning and value of this word is, “To live in thankfulness for the richness that makes life so precious.” Now I have the perfect word for my dream vacation.

Thank you all!