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Vol. 11, Issue 281 - Sunday, October 8, 2006

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## Hawaii's Back Yard

Cheryl Chee Tsutsumi

## Kauai inn treats guests as kamaaina

At the peak of their high-powered advertising careers in Los Angeles, Mike Hough and his wife, Martina, owned seven houses, four cars and a business earning well into seven figures.

They helped launch Hollywood blockbusters such as "Braveheart"; popular TV series, including "The Simpsons," "Northern Exposure," "Hercules," "Xena" and "Star Trek: The Next Generation"; and merchandising campaigns for Leica, Fender Guitars and other corporate giants.

It seemed they had achieved the American dream.

"But it got out of hand," says Hough. "We were working 14 hours a day, seven days a week, even during holidays. It took all of our energy just to keep the wheels turning. We were getting more and more work, and we were running faster and faster. We were making a lot of money, but we had no life."

## Kauai Country Inn

**Address:** 6440 Oloheua Road, Wailua, Kauai

**Call:** 808-821-0207

**Rates:** Four suites range in price from \$95 to \$155 per night, double occupancy. A four-night minimum stay is required, and \$20 per night is added for each additional guest (suites sleep two to five). The innkeepers request that children be at least 12 to stay in the suites. The adjacent three-bedroom, two-bath Country Cottage sleeps up to eight guests; young children are welcome there. Nightly rates begin at \$225, and there is a five-night minimum stay required. Shorter stays may be booked as the schedule permits; a \$35 cleaning fee is added. Prices include a gift of coffee, tea, chocolates, cookies and

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At the time, the Houghs were living in a beautiful new home on the flanks of the San Gabriel Mountains, but had never cooked a meal there because of their hectic schedules.

"We never got home before 9 o'clock at night," says Hough. "We'd pick up our son Johannes from school, eat at a restaurant, drive home, fall into bed, wake up, go to work and start the whole cycle again the next day."

The irony of having it all but in reality having nothing that truly mattered, Hough says, was especially evident at Christmas.

"You go shopping for gifts for your family, and there's nothing you can buy because your kid already has what he wants and needs, and your wife also has one of everything and sometimes two. It was sad; we realized we had to come up with a plan to change it."

So nine years ago the Houghs veered out of the fast lane. They sold their business, houses and cars in Los Angeles, and moved to a 2-acre retreat in lush, peaceful Wailua on Kauai's east side.

"We completely reversed our lifestyle," says Hough. "We went from making a lot of money and having no life to making no money by comparison but having a wonderful life."



COURTESY OF KAUAI COUNTRY INN  
Mike Hough shows the Mini Cooper S that formerly belonged to Beatles manager Brian Epstein. The car is now the centerpiece of Hough's Beatles Museum at Kauai Country Inn and is open only to inn guests.

Today, a big part of the Houghs' life is owning and operating Kauai Country Inn, which consists of a cottage and four suites -- Green Rose, Plumeria, Yellow Ginger and Orchid -- all exuding cheery tropical themes. Amenities include a full kitchen or kitchenette, equipped with all the necessary utensils, dishes and appliances, right down to the rice cooker; a TV, DVD and VCR; ceiling fans; hardwood floors; a deck or patio with a gas barbecue; and a computer with high-speed and Wi-Fi Internet access.

The one-bedroom Plumeria Suite has a bathroom as big as an apartment (be sure to reserve time for soaking in the Jacuzzi) and an eclectic assortment of decorative pieces, including hula photos, a framed Hawaiian quilt, embroidered boxes, Japanese fans, nuggets of coral, ceramic bowls, an antique clock, an ipu (gourd), old bottles, paniolo (cowboy) hats and more.

tea, chocolates, cookies and postcards, and use of boogie boards, golf clubs and snorkeling equipment.

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**Web site:**  
[www.kauaicountryinn.com](http://www.kauaicountryinn.com)

- » Da Kine
- » Honolulu Lite
- » Weekly Eater
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**Secrets to Success**  
Deborah & John-Paul Micek

"We used to live in the house where the suites are now located, and when we moved to our new house on the property, we didn't change a thing," Hough says. "We left everything there. That gives the suites a real homey feel."

No matter where at the inn they're staying, guests wake up to the murmurs of nature: birds chirping, a light rain falling, the wind stirring trees.

Guests are welcome to stroll through the lovely grounds on the edge of a rain forest and pick organic bananas, oranges, lemons, mangoes, guavas, passion fruit, grapefruit and star fruit. They also have access to an outdoor hot tub, free laundry facilities, the Houghs' collection of 4,000 movies and the only Beatles museum in the state (see sidebar).

According to Hough, Kauai Country Inn appeals to people who want to truly experience Hawaii. He and Martina go out of their way to help guests do that by offering dining tips; recommending beaches and places to hike and kayak; and providing directions to scenic spots most visitors don't get to see.

"We're targeting tourists who want a Hawaii experience that doesn't make them feel like they're tourists," Hough says. "They want to feel as though they're living the life they would live if they were kamaaina (local residents). Our aim is to make guests feel as though Kauai Country Inn is their very special home in Hawaii."

#### **On Politics**

Richard Borreca

#### **Tools**

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COURTESY OF KAUAI COUNTRY INN  
Green Rose Suite

**Cheryl Chee Tsutsumi** is a Honolulu-based free-lance writer and Society of American Travel Writers award winner.

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