

OPINION PAGES

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Bob and Patti Arthur: Micronesia originals

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It seems incomprehensible to say that “The Village” is closed. Impossible! Unbelievable! But it is true, and for the legions of friends and fans of Bob and Patti Arthur, who circle the globe, a bright welcome light in far-away Pohnpei has been extinguished.

There aren't enough adjectives to describe Bob and Patti, or their magnificent Village Hotel. As an itinerant journalist who began traveling to Pohnpei with pen and notepad in hand in 1976, I think I've used them all when either writing about or talking about the hotel and its founders. Welcoming. Unique. Respite. Those are among the few used to describe Bob and Patti and The Village. The one I prefer, though, is “original.”

They saw the future of international tourism in Micronesia early on, and clearly.

It wasn't going to be done through either fancy, all-the-bells-and-whistles resorts, or the more modest hotels that cater to the business and government traveler. It was going to be in providing the adventurous traveler with an authentic experience. Authentic culturally. Authentic hospitality.

And that's what Bob and Patti, and the hundreds of Pohnpeians who learned the intricacies of the hospitality industry from them at The Village, provided for decades.

It breaks my heart to know that The Village is no more. I remain hopeful, however, that those hundreds of islanders who learned from the best will carry on the traditions of Bob and Patti in their own ventures, whether in their own hotels and restaurants or not.

The Village Hotel and Bob and Patti Arthur. Gone but not forgotten by any of us who were blessed to have been touched by these two remarkable people.



Patients wait their turn on Mariposa to see Dr. Michael Leppert, pictured above and left with fellow medical doctor Rixzene Ayers of the yacht Pogeyan.



Cruiser provides dental clinics

Over 400 people on Aur, Maloelap and Ailuk Atolls received dental treatment — many for the first time — in recent months thanks to the 47-foot floating dental clinic Mariposa.

Dr. Michael Leppert and his crew Birgit Reimann from Hamburg has a complete dental clinic, including an X-ray machine, on board his big catamaran. Before heading to the outer islands, Leppert organized to get a license to practice medicine in the Marshall Islands. “I did 308 fillings, 296 extractions, 39 operations, 26 root canals, and 385 injections,” Leppert reported via email. “I

also on all the islands I visited checked the children in schools and kindergartens.”

Leppert holds the clinics for free, although he gladly accepts donations. Before coming to the Marshall Islands, Leppert treated over 500 people in French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga, and Fiji. He then sailed down to New Zealand before sailing north to RMI.

He is currently sailing down to Fiji, but luckily he very much enjoyed his stay in the Marshalls and plans to return for the next cruising season, which begins in early November.

Humans first, not rats

Once upon a time, a sender decided to mail some goodies to his folks back home in the Marshall Islands, without knowing any knowledge about what he is about to endure would be a huge ordeal of frustration and waste of money and time.

It happened between April 1 and May 3, 2013 when a lousy, sloppy, unprofessional way of handling people's packages occurred at the Marshall Islands Post Office. The sender sent the first box on April 1, the second on April 5, the third three boxes on April 9, and the last two boxes on April 15 at various post office locations in Honolulu, totaling seven boxes all together. He sent them by priority mail, because he thought the special boxes were a good deal since it mentions, “If it fits, it ships” on the covers.

However, since he lost track of the fate of the boxes after they left the last checking point in Honolulu, he seemed to feel uneasy, and suspect that something might be went wrong, because there were no new up-to-date information on the boxes available in the tracking and confirming in the computer. The only hold up problem was the lack of tracking system available to him by the Marshall Islands Postal System. He became hysterically frustrated and worried about the boxes.

Upon calling the received in Majuro, many

of his phone calls were answered with, “No, I haven't seen any box yet.” He often suspects that the boxes might have been mistakenly shipped by ship instead of airplane. Many times the sender visited each post office location, where he mailed each box, to check if by chance the boxes might have been returned, but no luck. But one morning, he got a call from one of the local post offices in Honolulu that one of his boxes has been mailed back because the special box he used was not recognized by the Marshall Islands Postal System, and the Marshall Islands Postal System is no longer under the United States Postal System and couldn't comply with the tracking system. What a stupid and immature excuse. The postmaster at the location, where his box has been returned, suggested and told him to file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Agency.

As the month of April passed by, the boxes were sitting inside the Marshall Islands Post Office, waiting to be claimed. Nobody even paid any attention or checked the boxes to see if they were still in good condition. Not until the sender called the post office in Honolulu to see if the returned box was still with them. The postmaster told the sender to call the receiver in Majuro to go and ask for the boxes.

Finally, on May 3, 2013, out of the blue, the

boxes were brought out to the receiver to be claimed. The Majuro postmaster asked the receiver, “How come you didn't come and claim the boxes long ago?” And the receiver responded, “Duh! I didn't know, because you didn't put out any pink slip into my mail box.”

Unfortunately, the contents from the two other boxes were eaten by rats, and the last box was still lost out there. The sad thing was that the boxes were given to the receiver without even any explanation given on how and why they ended up in such bad conditions by the postmaster.

Imagine how much you can become victim of others who treat you as if you were enemy and weak to fight for yourself. You ask yourself, “What did I do wrong, so I could be treated like this?” You would feel hurt and heartbroken, because the leftovers from the rats were given to the people to consume. It's an unsanitary and lousy way of doing the job. The management of the Marshall Islands Postal Service needs to step up to the standard of fairness and care to serve public needs in a more proper and professional way.

The story must be told in order to promote the awareness to the general public on how our packages and mails are being processed in and out of the Marshall Islands Postal System, and not to end up like what happen here in this story.