

# Apollo Hawaiian Treats

by Paul Kruppenbacher

I was out to Hawaii on an Apollo recovery mission (it may have been 13) and upon hitting the beach, checked in at the Hilton. It was a beautiful afternoon and I and my traveling partner (it might have been Randy Stone) went looking for buddy Mike Collins who had arrived earlier and was also staying at the Hilton. Where else to look for Mike under Hawaiian sunshine but the outdoor patio bar. And there he was, sitting under an umbrella, sipping a tropical drink, munching on tropical snacks, and, most impressive, accompanied by two handsome (one male, one female) hotel staff. They greeted us with big smiles and offers of a drink, on the house. Of course my first thought was of possible problems with accepting gratuities as a government employee (and yes, my USAF credentials sufficed, not to mention my NASA badge). My second thought was, "I sure am thirsty". So we sat down and enjoyed the free drinks. The hotel folks were very gracious and clearly were trying to make us all feel right at home. As the minutes went on, I was more and more impressed that the hotel would be so accommodating. After all, we were merely LRD engineers! As Mike ordered us another round in his characteristic good natured, yet "I'm pulling your chain" manner, he asked us "How did you like the fruit basket in your room?" We were kind of surprised with the question and replied, "We didn't get any." Mike said that his was huge. The hotel staff smiled knowingly, nodded at Mike and shortly thereafter excused themselves in that they had to get back to other duties. After they left, Mike continued to look at us with a big (you know what kind) grin and finally the light bulb came on. He was "the" Mike Collins from NASA Houston. They thought they were wining and dining an astronaut! And Mike didn't give them any reason to think anywise."

We later all had a good laugh and I wonder yet today what other benies Mike ripped off the Waikiki Hilton during that trip. This was but of many humorous adventures with Mike and our Landing and Recovery Division, Recovery Systems Branch, Chaput Section that we all enjoyed during those glory years of Apollo.

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