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Round the World in 90 Days (II) Hawaii Title 296

From La Jolla return to Los Angeles and on to Honolulu, where I had been invited to stay with Dr Ed Creutz, a Member of the Board, in his small but very comfortable tropical home. A nuclear physicist originally, he had become a high executive of the National Science Foundation in Washington where I met him and where he joined the Editorial Board. He took early retirement from the N S F and was appointed Director of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu, which has an extensive Polynesian collection of the history of Hawaii and its ancient royalty.

This was all new to me and I was fortunate to have in my host a scholar who gladly shared his treasures with me and was able to explain them. So, for example, the royal cloaks were made from thousands of small feathers. But my main interest was the astronomical observatory on Mauna Kea, 4200 m, situated on the Island of Hawaii; whereas Honolulu, the capital, is located on Oahu Island. As Hawaii is the largest island of the group, the whole US State of Hawaii has taken its name from it.

Using the Aloha Airline, I flew 40 minutes to Hilo on Hawaii Island, where I was met by car and driver for the exciting trip of 4 kilometers up to the observatory on top of the extinct Mauna Kea volcano in the centre of the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. I knew of the established shortly before in 1979, large British infrared telescopic reflector, 3.8 m, and was impressed by it.

Had I still been the Science Correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph,* I would have been able to file an exciting story to London. The British astronomers who had only arrived a few months before me had been unaware of the bitter cold at that height, and when the road down to Hilo on the coast had been cut off by winter weather were isolated in the observatory. They were forced to burn their furniture to stay alive in the sub-zero temperatures at that height.

About 35 kilometers south of Mauna Kea lies Mauna Loa, 4100 m, which is a still active volcano erupting on an average every 3.5 years. On my return drive down to Hilo the driver kindly drove me to it, so that I could see the burning lava flow issuing from one of its fissures. It was an awe inspiring sight, red hot lava coming out of the ground, turning black and cold on its surface, a short distance further down, with the red hot rocks shining through. I had seen many colour photographs and films of flowing lava before; but it was totally different standing near one of nature's great spectacles, the heat-radiating mass of stones, on its slow but unstoppable stream downhill.

What an unforgettable mighty wonder of nature, frightening and of dangerous power.

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