During the dark, cold days of winter, every Alaskan dreams of spending Christmas vacation frolicking on a sunny beach, whether it’s in Florida, Mexico or Hawaii. This past Christmas break, Adela Batin headed to Maui for a honeymoon with her new husband Larry Jackson.

Adela reflected, “On Christmas Day we boarded the Alaska Airlines flight in Fairbanks. We walked down the aisle, and as we reached our seats, Todd Paris, UAF University Relations Editor, jumped up and gave me a big Aloha hug. Todd was on his way with his wife to the Caribbean and was already wearing his flowered island shirt, shorts and straw hat! His son, a UAF exchange student, had spent the fall semester in the Caribbean, so Todd thought it would be the perfect time to plan a vacation in that part of the world.”

“I was surprised,” said Adela, “as I glanced towards the seats behind us to see Pastor Philip Kuehnert and his family. Pastor Kuehnert was the one who recently married Larry and me. They were headed south to spend the holidays with family.”

“Our connecting flight in Anchorage was delayed for twelve hours due to problems with the plane. There was a hole in the stabilizer the size of a football. While a new replacement plane was being flown from Honolulu and the mass of displaced passengers was being reorganized by the Hawaiian Vacations crew, we ran into Jeannie Phillips and family and Dan Callahan and family, who were scheduled on our flight. As we finally boarded the Hawaiian Airlines flight late that evening, we ran into Tammi Ganguli and her husband, Rajve, who were also on their honeymoon.”

Adela continued, “During the return flight from Honolulu to Anchorage on January 11th, I glanced up to see Pat Pitney and her daughter Crystal strolling the aisle to stretch their legs during the 5 ½ hour flight.”

Pat and her family had flown to the Big Island of Hawaii on December 22nd. Their vacation had scarcely begun, when tragedy struck on Christmas Day. Pat’s 11-year-old daughter Crystal was wading in the ocean. She turned to walk into a small wave, and as she did, the wave came up, hit her in the chest and knocked her over backwards. As she struggled to get up, she knew something was wrong with her back. After she got out of the water, she was assisted by the lifeguard and paramedics, placed on a back board and taken to the local hospital. Xrays revealed her back was broken!

The family flew to Honolulu where Crystal was placed in the hospital. Her 4th, 5th and 6th thoracics had been fractured but were all still intact. The 7th and 8th were broken apart and doctors used some of the bone from her hip to repair the break. The 9th, 10th and 11th thoracics were compressed. The doctors placed a metal rod in her back.

Pat and Jeannie, along with their respective families, were headed to the Caribbean and were already on their way with their wife to the Caribbean and was already wearing his flowered island shirt, shorts and straw hat! His son, a UAF exchange student, had spent the fall semester in the Caribbean, so Todd thought it would be the perfect time to plan a vacation in that part of the world.”

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Feeling a little wirey?

This is how most of us felt before the holiday vacation. The Mexican potluck on the shortest day of the year, included sunshine and delicious food that warmed the belly. Thanks to Chris Garris and his wonderful Mexican Fiesta theme!

Hopefully you had a refreshing vacation and are starting the new year with enthusiasm!
Making Waves
(continued from front)

extending from the 3rd to the 12th thoracic. Crystal spent her Christmas vacation in the hospital from December 25 until January 3rd, when she moved to an apartment next to the hospital, where she stayed until January 11th.

Crystal is now in school and has special chairs she is able to sit in. It will be 1 1/2 months before she is able to start physical therapy and swimming. She’s doing better and Pat sincerely appreciates all the get well wishes and support from friends and co-workers. Pat said that during this whole ordeal, she really got a sense of support from the Fairbanks the community.

Adela concluded, “On Wednesday, January 9th, Larry and I were walking along our favorite beach in Maui. We were supposed to meet a friend from Fairbanks who had recently moved to Paia, Maui. We wondered why the beach was so deserted on such a beautiful, sunny day, until we noticed a sign posted in the middle of the beach. It warned us of the undertow of the quick, shallow waves. I noticed how much quicker the surf lapped up on the beach that day. The day before, Maui had 20-foot waves, and it was a surfer’s delight. But in that evening’s newspaper, several articles reported people being hurt in the surf. It amazed me how something so soft and fluid could also be so hard and treacherous. I gained a new respect for the water and surf."

From Lisa Sporleder:

Had a nice, quiet Christmas here in town. Breakfast with a friend’s family, dinner with another friend’s family. December 29, I had my Open House so folks could see what the new place looks like in it’s unfinished splendor! I spent most of my time off getting ready for the party, finishing up things that you only do when company is going to come and check it out. :-)