

## *Liars figure and figures lie, in my humble opinion*

Half my headline, 'liars figure and figures lie,' came from my column last week. The other, in my humble opinion, me to be completely one-sided, subjective and opinionated, including using figures... just for this one column. Will mine lie? This is something you, my good audience, have to decide for yourself. Just like real life.

For instance, as my faithful readers (my wife, and, ummm, my editor) I am of the opinion that many of the multi-million second home offerings on the market today (remembering that this is the high season for well-heeled visitors) are poor values. I base this on the simple perception that, historically, the highest prices paid for homes in the state are homes on the beach. Now many will argue that the value in a home depends on the finishes (teakwood doors, marble columns) and the design/layout (6 car garage, ballroom with orchestra seating, indoor polo field) which do add up. But, to my analytical mind, the variable, once the price rises above three million dollars for a home, is the beach.

Simply put, a good beach, a good price... but a great beach, a great price. Common sense? I think so. But, how to prove this? I went on an internet search for what are the most expensive listings in Hawaii. How'd I do that? go to the best website for finding homes in Hawaii:

[http://www.mauiboard.com/news\\_index.mv?id=1020811197](http://www.mauiboard.com/news_index.mv?id=1020811197)

I did a search for all homes over \$3 million. The results for 3/20/2003 show that there were 144 homes (including condos) statewide listed over \$3 million. Sixty (42%) were on the water, as were eight (40%) of the top twenty highest priced (topping out at almost \$20 million. Hands down, Maui had the most oceanfront homes on the block, while the Big Island had the least. That figures (take that as lying, or take that lying down): Big Island has the most lava, least reef, of any island... while Maui is well-beached, much-desired and under-populated.

The next question is: is the beach at the most expensive home listed the best beach?

I don't think so, but first let me define what is meant by 'best beach' and particularly how to rank it (to beach or not to beach). Here, I should give credit where credit is due: the first mover in this jurisdiction (errr, description) goes to Dr. Beach, a.k.a., Dr. Stephen P. Leatherman, a Ph.D. in Environmental (Coastal) who was the Director of the Laboratory for Coastal Research at the University of Maryland. He's written a ton of books on the subject of beach health (go to <http://www.drbeach.org>) and has given out an annual award for the best beaches in America for over a decade. Like me, you may totally disagree with him. But, like me, you should appreciate his thoughtfulness (he lists 50 separate criteria) at before arriving at a personal judgment of deeply emotional topic.

What's on his list? Stuff like beach width/texture/softness, water/air temperature, wind/rain/sun, water and social safety, surf zone, wave size, water

color/clarity/cleanliness, smells, insects, vistas, absence of real estate columnists (or salespeople).

I have no problem adopting his methodology, but let me simplify it: can your kids walk out your front door and right down to the beach... and play happily and safely for hours without you worrying, or watching. Kids of any age, including grandparents of a certain age.

Why is that my criteria? Because the virtue, the value, of a beach is the experience you have (it's actually a pretty personal, pretty intense, relationship – like love). And, if you can't get in the water because of (see above), then what's the point of paying over \$3 million when you'd be just as happy with something for under \$3 million. And, remember resale values are higher when the beach is better (IMHO, i.e., in my humble opinion).

Based on this, the best beach value, IMHO, is Wailea (actually Waikiki, but let's go there anon). Why? Not windy, warm; small waves, gentle surf; wide dry beach, wide wet beach, wide shallow slope going seaward. No sharp reef. No sudden drop-off. No boats, surfers, jet skis.

Does Dr. Beach agree with me? Nope. His first pick for the best beach in the U.S.A. was Kapalua (too rocky, too windy, too many waves in winter, IMHO), followed by Hapuna/Mauna Kea (too many big waves in winter), Lanikai/Kailua (the wind is onshore all the time, making it windy, cold and full of jellyfish), Hulopoe (a bit reefy & rocky, plus the bottom drops off too fast),