

# Small Town, Big World: God Bless Our Motorbike

By Britt Bensen Steele

One fine day, while living six months out of each year in Bali, we decided it was time we own a motorbike instead of renting month by month. We talked to our Balinese friend, Nuadi, and he agreed to purchase the bike in his name, as foreigners were not allowed to buy vehicles. Little did we know what a cultural excursion we were getting ourselves into.

As it turned out, the day we got the motorbike, Nuadi informed us that we should not drive the bike until a ceremony was performed. The ceremony was important, he explained, "to call upon the Gods and good spirits" and to keep us out of danger. At that time, the Balinese healthcare system wasn't what I would call "confidence-building." So, we figured we should take all the help we could get, especially given the Balinese drove motorbikes on the opposite side of the road (as our brains thought was reasonable), and generally did so with some sort of intuition as their guide, rendering turn signals and headlights useless.

Ten days later, Nuadi arrived at our house to tell us it was "ceremony today" and to get dressed for temple (aka church). We did so, and then hopped on the back of his motorbike and headed to his family compound. We were greeted by tiny old women, also adorned in ceremonial dress, giggling and speaking quickly in Balinese. We went to the cen-

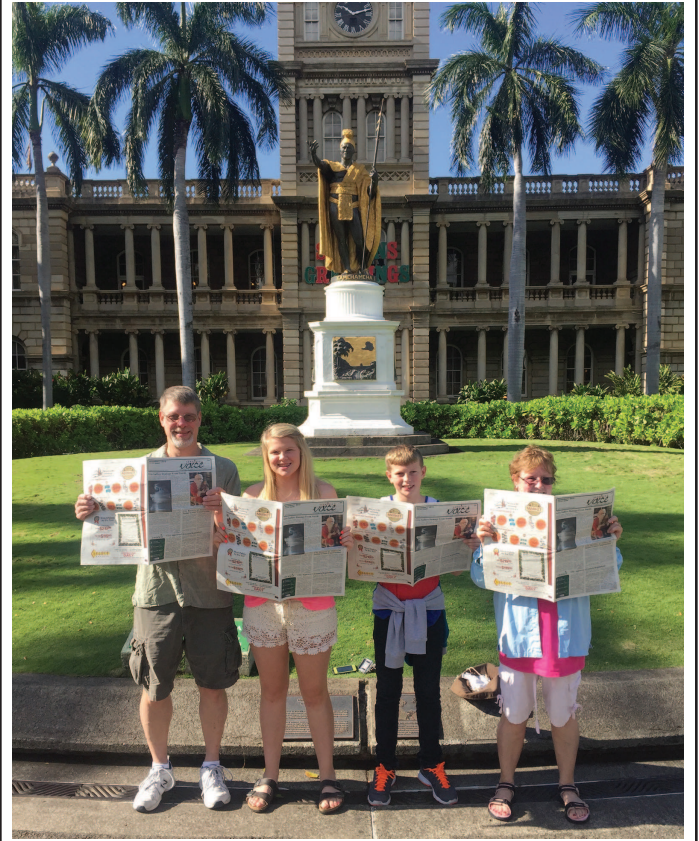
ter of the compound and sat in the "outdoor living room" (which also serves as the family's wedding hall and funeral home when circumstances require). There were maybe seven of us. Within an hour, a priest arrived, with his dog. Within a few moments, we bowed our heads and were given a blessing in the form of dried rice on our foreheads. Someone pushed play on an old-school tape recorder, and traditional Balinese music began. We sat in "prayer" while the priest chanted, burned incense, made offerings and sprinkled some sort of holy water on our black and hot pink motorbike. We watched. This went on for some 45 minutes or so until the music was turned off, and Nuadi nodded, put his hands in prayer position, bowed to the motorbike, and to the priest, and motioned that we do the same. He said "okay" and began to



undress the motorbike from its own ceremonial garb and wheeled it out to us and handed us the keys. We paid the priest for his time and blessings and off we went.

I doubt we will ever know exactly what happened that day. What we know is that after that, we never got in an accident. I'm not going to say it was because of the long and arduous motorbike blessing, but I'm also not going to say that it wasn't. There's a lot of things going on that you can't see, and the way I see it, "when in Rome do as the Romans do"... and "when in Bali, find the local priest and get yourself a motorbike blessing."

## Where Do You Read The Voice?



**Randy (far left) and Sharon Parrow (far right), along with grandkids Allegra (middle left) and Aidan Poetter (middle right) took time out from during their Christmas vacation in Hawaii to read the Voice in front of the Hawaii 5-0 Headquarters. (wish we could...) Be there, Aloha!**

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