

PLAY IT SAFE OR TAKE A RISK by Joan Mish

An adventure after retirement was inspired by a fellow school librarian who had volunteered in many National Parks. I did not know this gentleman well for he only retired in the small rural town where I was living. After I retired I asked him if his wife would mind if we went out for coffee to discuss volunteering at the National Parks. And he assured me she would be fine with it.

So we sat down in a coffee shop and he explained how he could get me into Hawaii Volcanos National Park for he knew most of the rangers for he had been there twice. Well, that would have been my first choice for I had done a little research. After my husband had passed away, 2 years before, I knew I had to figure out a way to travel alone. We had done a lot of traveling together after our children had left home.

My new friend said he would write me a recommendation to Hawaii Volcanos National Park. But I said you hardly know me. But he assured me he knew what it took to be a school librarian. Within 6 weeks I was called and invited to come to Hawaii Volcano National Park as a volunteer the following spring! Oh my goodness, I was delighted.

Now the problem was, I knew very little geology and how volcanos are made. BUT the training in every national park has been fantastic! We are trained for a week so that we can give presentations to our guests and answer questions. I knew zilch about plate tectonics except what I had learned from a former student a few years before. One day this student came into the library and asked for help finding information on plate tectonics. I had to go to the science teacher to inquire what that term meant "plate tectonic". She said I was too old to know. It was not an established theory until after I had left college! This student did a good job of explaining the term to me. And that was in the days before I had access to the internet. As I gave my presentations at Hawaii Volcano I always mention this student who had taught me so much. We always learn from our students, don't we? Plate tectonic is how the islands were formed just for your information!

Living in a park with a free room I learned and saw quite a bit of the Hawaiian islands. Did you know that Spam is the most popular food there for during WWII it was the only meat they could find.

I have volunteered at 8 different Parks and had some great experiences and adventures. I was at The Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Gila Cave Dwellings, Natural Bridges, Dinosaur National Park, St. Gaudens, and Cowpens. Several of those are National Monuments.

I did take a risk on these adventures and it has changed my life.