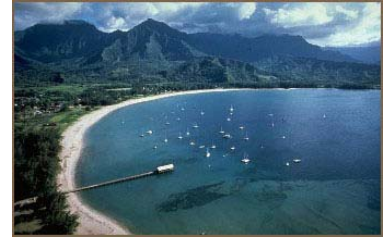


This article was first published in the March 2020 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter. It is part of Sylvia's ongoing series about living on Kauai, Hawaii.

## Puff the Magic Dragon

Hanalei Bay, here on the north shore of Kauai, is my favorite spot in the world. In 1990 we purchased a house just a few blocks away from this beautiful bay and named it **The Harper's House**. We advertised it as a vacation rental in my mail order catalog for about ten years because it included a harp to play on! My current condo is about a 10-minute drive away from this gorgeous bay.



Hanalei Bay has been featured in many movies, including *South Pacific* (1958) and George Clooney's *The Descendants* (2011).

Many people also say that Hanalei Bay is the home of *Puff the Magic Dragon*, and that the *land called Honalee* in the famous 1963 Peter, Paul and Mary song was really about Hanalei. However, according to a 2004 article in our local *Garden Island* newspaper, Peter Yarrow said the song was not written about Hanalei, and that the similar name was just a "serendipitous coincidence." Also, contrary to popular belief, the song is not about drug use. It is about the "innocence of childhood lost."

The lyrics of *Puff the Magic Dragon* began in 1959 as a poem by Peter Yarrow's Cornell classmate Leonard Lipton, who was inspired by the 1936 Ogden Nash poem titled *The Tale of Custard the Dragon*. Peter later added the melody and gave Lipton credit for the lyrics, along with half of the song's royalties.

The song lyrics say:

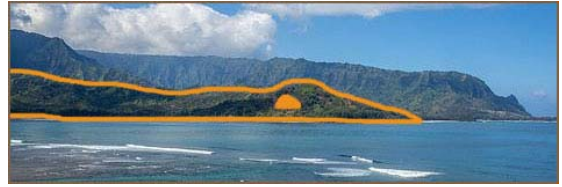
*"Puff the Magic Dragon lived by the sea and frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honalee."* Notice that Honalee rhymes with "sea," but Hanalei would rhyme with "bay."

So, it seems to me that if they had meant Puff to live in Hanalei, they would have written:

*"Puff the Magic Dragon lived by the **bay** and frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called **Hanalei**."*

All that being said . . . Puff really DOES live in Hanalei. If you know where to look, you can see him sleeping by the bay. He's a bit hard to see in the photos, because his body blends in with the green mountains behind him, so I'm giving you some help. The brown triangle amidst the green foliage is his eye. His back goes on, and on, and on, as far as your imagination will take you around the bay.





\*P.S. By the way, my father was a huge fan of Ogden Nash, and *The Tale of Custard the Dragon* was one of my favorite poems when I was a child. I even memorized it for a poetry assignment in grammar school.