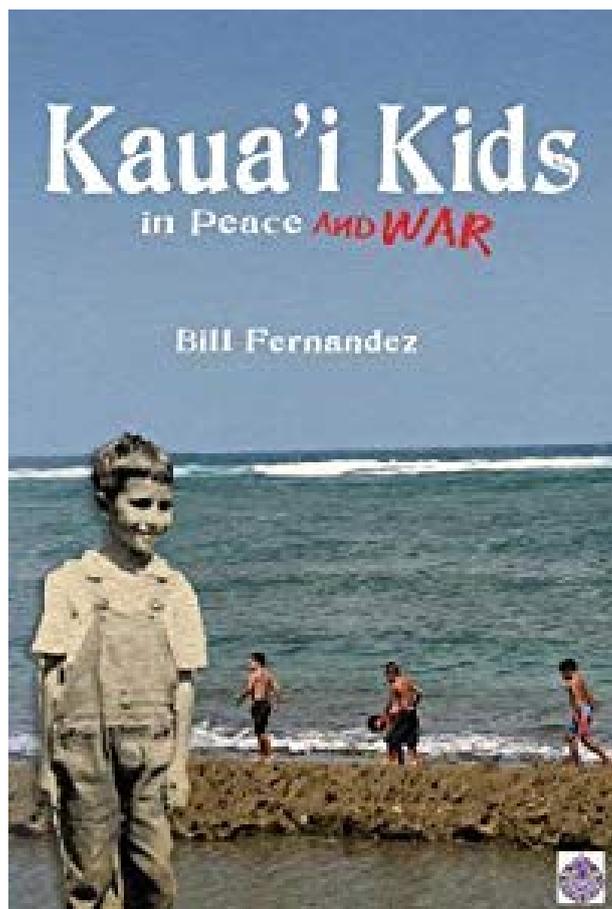


# Kaua'i Kids in Peace and WW Two



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Bill Fernandez's barefoot adventures on the Hawaiian island of Kaua'i during the 1930s-1940s make a good read for lazy afternoons. Sugar plantations dominated the economy and imported labor created a diverse people from every corner of the world it seems. Asians, Europeans, and South Pacific Islanders joined with the Native Hawaiians which created a rich mix of people all working hard and all helping each other survive. There were few stores and no money to buy toys so kids created their own using tree branches, pine cones, palm fronds, and newspapers glued with poi for kites, tin roofs molded into canoes, ironing boards as surfboards, and firecrackers for noise. As sugar cane trains rolled near their homes they pulled cane from moving trains to enjoy the sweet juice. An innocent time in the middle of the Pacific. Until war came. In Part I, Bill's first ten years without today's modern electronics didn't mean life was boring. He and his pals explored the ocean, made tin canoes, picked seaweed and opihi from the rocks at the surfline, tried to find Santa Claus in the mountains, slid down waterfalls, and played Cowboys and Indians for end days with no concern for tomorrow. The Hawaiian community net fishing (hukilau) brought excitement to the community as it captured a large school of fish with a net surround, everyone pulling in on the net. Then the party started. Afflicted with asthma, his half-Hawaiian mother brought him to a kahuna (shaman) and Chinese herbalist despite being raised Catholic. Bill's family, friends, and neighbors were Chinese, Okinawan, Phillipino, Japanese, German, Portuguese, French, Irish, Russian, Native Hawaiians, and others who created the sharing society, all struggling, all helping each other. Buddhist temples sat next to Christian churches. Bill's parents built the largest movie theater in the islands, Roxy, in 1939, a story he tells in words and old pictures in Rainbows Over

Kapa'a. Kaua'i Kids is a perfect companion to that book. Part II is dedicated to the courageous American Nisei soldiers (second generation Japanese raised in the islands) and begins with the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan in the next island, Oahu, sixty-seven miles away on a beautiful December morning. Radios went silent. A Japanese plane landed on a nearby island. Fear of invasion by Japan gripped defense Kaua'i and the carefree life ended. Blackouts, shelling by Japanese, gas masks, a sense of being very much alone and unprotected dominated life. One morning he awoke to find hundreds of GIs camped on a church lawn. The Fighting 69th had arrived and with it, antagonism toward the Asian-Americans who were friends and family. Bill discovered the profits to be made buying cigarettes, cokes, and candy for the GIs, even delivering them after dark to the machine gun nest near his ocean side home. Soon he started shining shoes. He learned a lot about life from the men and watching the action in town. The hard work of pineapple picking replaced his lazy days. But the ocean, source of food for islanders to supplement meager rationed food, was off-limits and barb-wired. Boats and fishing were banned. The easy-living island became a big prison under military control. These experiences with military occupation were unique in America and Bill tells it through the eyes of a child. Bill's education took a major turn in 1944 when he was sent to Honolulu to Kamehameha School for children of Native Hawaiian blood. The book ends as Bill flies there, realizing his life would not be the same.