

Fish cutter, peddler became a top Hawaii fishcake maker

BY KAYLEE NOBORIKAWA
knoborikawa@starbulletin.com

Tatsuo Goto advanced from a fish cutter to a fish peddler to the founder of one of the island's largest fishcake manufacturers, Red and White Foods Inc.

"He was a very hard worker," said his son Dennis. "His success was based on his physical and mental strength and his drive. He had to be a driven guy to do all of this."

Goto died May 17 in Leahi Hospital. He was 93.

Born in Paauilo, Hawaii, Goto began working when he was 12 years old for the Hamakua Sugar Plantation and Hawaii Consolidated Railway. He saved enough to travel to Manchuria and Japan, which motivated him to move onto bigger things, and in 1939 he moved to Oahu for better job opportunities, his son said.

Despite the hardships of the Depression, Goto found a job in Honolulu as a fish cutter for M. Otani Fish Co., his son said. After several years in the fish business,



Tatsuo Goto:
The successful fish business operator started working at 12

Goto started his first business, delivering fresh fish to neighborhoods.

As a fish peddler, Goto realized that fishcake was a major item, and created a factory in Kakaako with his wife, Joyce Murata.

With nearly a decade of experience in the fish business, Goto opened the mom-and-pop factory in 1947 with five employees and expanded four times, with 60 workers by the time the company closed in 2004.

Red and White Foods sold fishcake to fish peddlers in the 1950s, but as the company grew larger, so did its clients, which included

supermarkets, restaurants and mainland retailers.

Hideko Murakami of Manoa worked with Goto for more than 25 years and described him as a generous boss and kindhearted man. When asked why Red and White Foods was so successful, Murakami said, "He took good care of his employees. Mr. and Mrs. Goto worked very hard with all the workers."

Goto sold Red and White Foods to Kibun Foods in 1993, and the business closed in 2004 when the Japanese corporation closed its Oahu operations.

In 1953 Goto started Holo Market on Kekaulike Street in Chinatown, which provided meat, produce and fish to locals for nearly 30 years.

He is survived by sons Dennis and Larry, brother Kats, sisters Edna Yamamoto and Carol Maeda, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The visitation will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday at Hosoi Garden Mortuary, followed by the service at 2 p.m. Casual attire is requested.