

Pu'uloa, the Pearl of Aquaculture

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Pearl Harbor and its Pacific Command support facilities make it one of the most armed spots on the planet. In 1980, on the eve of the 39th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Honolulu investigative reporter Ian Lind wrote a piece titled, "What Pearl Harbor Means to Hawaiians." He noted before dredging, Pearl Harbor was too shallow to be used as a harbor and was known as Pu'uloa. It was a "major fish farm, the center of an advanced system of aquaculture. Hawaiians raised a variety of fish in a series of fishponds, which lined the shores of the inland lake. At the point where the waters opened to the ocean, four major traps caught fish, which came in and out with the tides. It has been estimated that the area in and around Pu'uloa yielded 10 to 15 tons of fish each month."

"When portions of the shoreline and fishing rights in Pearl Harbor were condemned in the years before and after World War I, many owners were forced to sue to get paid. The federal courts eventually ruled that the former owners were entitled to both fair value of the property and additional damages as a result of the Navy's high-handed tactics," Ian continued. "During and after World War II, it was standard practice to seize lands and offer to pay owners only a fraction of the property's actual value. If the owners protested, their jobs were threatened and their patriotism was questioned."

Some landowners did brave these pressures and filed suit to demand just compensation. In 1946, one of Hawai'i's daily newspapers reported the 'astonishing fact' that every condemnation proceeding contested by the owners had been lost by the Navy."

The brings to mind the current Navy controversy at Red Hill. During World War II, O'ahu mountainsides were hollowed to store 250 million gallons of fuel at Red Hill. After 80 years, the tanks are leaking and affecting drinking water. Gov. Ige wants the tanks drained. The Navy doesn't.

When remembering Pearl Harbor, Ian advised, remember Pu'uloa.