

## 100 years of Elks in Hawaii: Honolulu for Civilians after December 7, 1941

While 616 Elks were fighting in Europe and the Pacific, Hawaii was a 'forward combat area.'

What was life like for Elk civilians in Honolulu?

Owing to Emergency  
THE DINING ROOM  
of the  
**ELKS' CLUB**  
will be closed to the general public  
until further notice.  
Catering to House Guests Only

As November 1941 ended, Elks 616 plans December charity: a children's party at Leahi Hospital; a military unit to get a Christmas tree; a cash gift to a member at Elks National Home. December will be a fun month. Yes, civilians are urged to leave Manila, and those talks with Japanese envoys in DC aren't going well. Nothing you can do about that. Let's get tickets to Charlie Chaplin's new movie *The Great Dictator*<sup>1</sup> at the Princess or Tyrone Power *A Yank in the RAF* at Waikiki Theater<sup>2</sup>.

December 1941: Honolulu plans a busy December 7<sup>th</sup>: Elks Memorial services compete with a Royal Hawaiian band concert, Hawaiian Trail & Mountain Club Makua to Kaena Pt. hike, Kamehameha student parade, Academy of Arts recorded Gilbert & Sullivan opera. Instead....

December 7<sup>th</sup> 616 Elks awakened by bombing find a pre-printed *Advertiser* describing a life gone forever: Saturday's Shrine benefit UH vs. Willamette football game, Santa ads for now irrelevant luxuries. With *Advertiser* presses down, *Star Bulletin* ran Extras pairing fear and the mundane: mounting death toll AND *Bus Runs on Reduced Schedule*; how to put out incendiary bombs AND no Library overdue book fines; marital law declared AND theaters will open early afternoon (blackout).

In the next few days Oahu families found space in their homes for military wives and children from Schofield, Pearl, and other bases. Casualty lists were published - until halted December 12 by censorship. Schools and businesses were closed, many taken as quick military offices and quarters.

Business was shaken by chaos, delayed shipments, with products on-hand but of no interest to a war-front public. Add in the military buying up all any supplies needed on purchase orders that might be paid months later! All at year's end when Christmas shopping should fix up a business' bottom line.

Although Grand Lodge's Elks War Commission offered to take Hawaii Elk children under a program to house from war zone evacuees at the Elks National Home, none went. The Elko, NV, lodge stands out as sending funds to aid Oahu.

With incoming shipping stopped, food became a serious concern. Rationing meant the Elks Club could only get enough food to serve Lodge residents<sup>3</sup>. Newspapers printed official directives to DRINK MILK as military buying dropped<sup>4</sup> yet local cows kept on giving. Despite the city going 'dry' as liquor sales were halted in the first months of martial law, switching to milk may have been too much even for patriotic Elks.

Life in Honolulu under martial law was prohibitions and shortages. When the Lodge met again members looked out on barbwire-protected beaches. Blackout and curfew moved Lodge meetings, and all public events, *for the duration* to Sundays or Saturdays. Gas rationing made it hard for the visiting committee to see sick Elks; members donated ration coupons.

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**BANK of HAWAII**

Newspapers ran practical columns: *Gardening for Defense*, *Defense Dishes* [cooking with limited ingredients], *Blackout Brevities* [what to do in the dark], and diagrams for digging your own bomb shelter<sup>5</sup>. Society pages became *On the Home Front*. Sports stories included *Boxing Big Help in Bayonet Work*. Have a pass to be out at night? Car headlights had to be darkened. Going anywhere anytime? Gas mask required, adults and children. Life settled in: work hours extended; homes blacked out; patriots rode Honolulu Rapid Transit (bus saved gas), collected scrap metal, recycled bottles. Bottlers ran blunt ads - return bottles or no new soda and beer. Incoming freight needed a military priority; empty bottles didn't qualify. Hoarding was unpatriotic: bring in an empty X to get a new X (toothpaste tube, light bulb, anything).

Hawaii changed as thousands of young men streamed to the islands and military dependents were shipped to the west coast. For Hawaii born wives this often created great hardship with no mainland support system. If your family had 'pull' you might get 'war work' and an exemption as did a woman who related: "My father barged into that office and told them 'Not my daughter' and I worked the whole time at

Pearl." Women took many jobs vacated by men; people were frozen in their job; many worked two jobs. Elks, everyone, pitched in.

Anita Manning, 616 Lodge  
Historian

References:

Allen, G 1950 *Hawaii's war years*  
Advertiser/Star-Bull news morgue

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<sup>1</sup> See film clip: Chaplin as Jewish barber mistaken for militaristic Tomania dictator Adenoid Hynkel (Hitler) gives speech reversing Hynkel's policy to invade Osterlich (Austria) with help of Bacteria's Dictator Benzini Napaloni (Mussolini). [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcvjoWOwnn4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcvjoWOwnn4)

<sup>2</sup> 1940: American pilot ferries bomber to Britain. Pursing girlfriend (B. Grable), he joins Royal Air Force to stay in England; ends up helping evacuate Allied troops at Dunkirk, France.

<sup>3</sup> Members could rent rooms.

<sup>4</sup> No PX, no dependants, limited chow halls

<sup>5</sup> Most found it impossible to dig illustrated 6 ft deep holes in Hawaii's lava soils, instead shallow trenches made mosquitoes with rains.