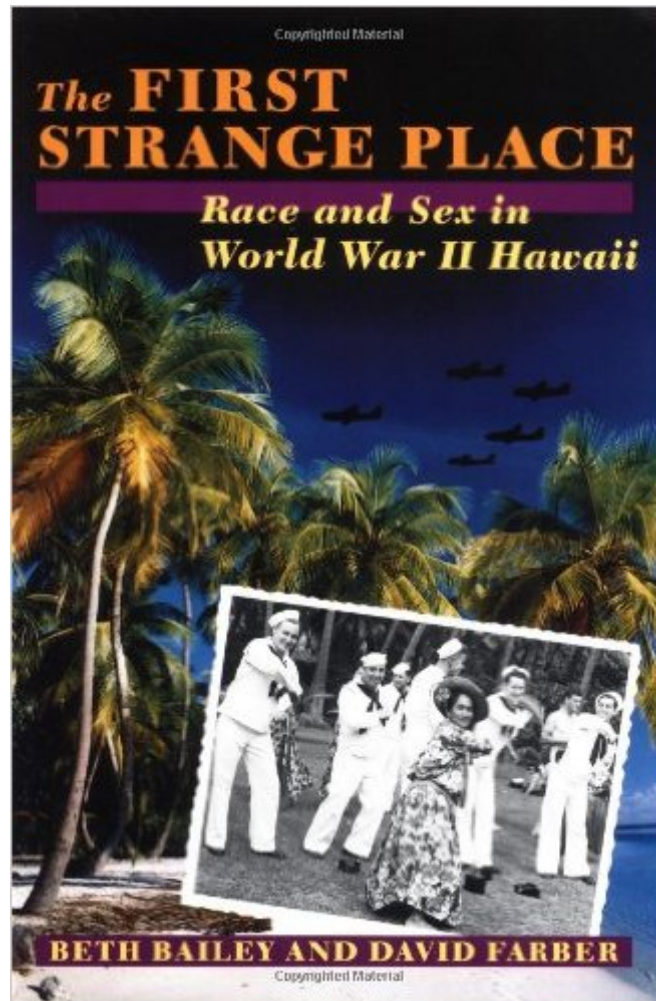


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# The First Strange Place: Race And Sex In World War II Hawaii



## Synopsis

As the forward base and staging area for all U.S. military operations in the Pacific during World War II, Hawaii was the "first strange place" for close to a million soldiers, sailors, and marines on their way to the horrors of war. But Hawaii was also the first strange place on another kind of journey, toward the new American society that would begin to emerge in the postwar era. Unlike the rigid and static social order of prewar America, this was to be a highly mobile and volatile society of mixed racial and cultural influences, one above all in which women and minorities would increasingly demand and receive equal status. Drawing on documents, diaries, memoirs, and interviews, Beth Bailey and David Farber show how these unprecedented changes were tested and explored in the highly charged environment of wartime Hawaii.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is the best ever done on the WWII scene in the Islands. The research is exhaustive, and the stories extremely well-told. I am a historian and author in Hawai'i--concentrating on the 19th century but well aware of the 20th--and the authors have done a great job of not only telling the stories but coming to the correct conclusions. The two chapters on Black soldiers and the sex trade are especially good. The title refers to the idea that Hawai'i, with very different foods, traditions and most of its population Oriental and Polynesian, was the first strange place that most young servicemen ever encountered. On their way to fight Japanese, they are stationed on an island with more than a third of the population of Japanese ancestry. If you want an insight as to the impact of suddenly tripling the population of an island, primarily with young fighting men, this is the book. It's a

GREAT read, and it all happened!

I am an avid history buff, including WWII on both fronts and I purchased this book online after visiting Hawaii on vacation. What struck my interest was several locals, elders, etc. mentioning places and things they observed during war time Hawaii. I read this book over the course of a few days and read it again, to make sure I read everything correctly. I've yet to never read or come across this information again in other literature because--- THIS BOOK DID ALL THE RESEARCH. It takes another look at what keeps our soldiers happy and the flip side of things. I listen to many audio books and I've never heard this portion in any books. Great and interesting read. I highly suggest it.

The mainland during the 1940s was mostly just white and Black, with rigid segregation and anti-miscegenation laws. Hawaii of that time had many races and they married and mingled if not freely than without as much stigma. In Hawaii, Portuguese and (European-phenotyped?) Puerto Ricans were not deemed "haole," the Hawaiian term most often used for whites. Add into the mix that far more men, as soldiers, came to the islands during the war. Add these two opposites together and there was a radical alteration of race, gender, and possibly class in Hawaii. This book is accessible to non-academic readers without being insulting to one's intelligence. The authors use letters, military reports, local newspapers, etc. to paint a picture, from multiple perspectives about this wartime juxtaposition. The first chapter initially talked about Hawaii, hours before Pearl Harbor's attack, generally and it made me suspicious that the work would be boring. However, the authors were really trying to ground that while sex and dancing and racism and intermarriage were going on, folk were still worried about housing and TV and what's for dinner. The chapters become more interesting as you progress through the book, so you may want to read the last chapters first. My one critique about this book is that oftentimes interracial dynamics were scant. In the prostitution chapter, it seemed that clients and workers were only of the majority group. The chapter on sex spoke much more about same-race interactions and then only slowly moved to interracial counterparts. I am especially interested in the dynamics between people of color and the chapter on African Americans in the highly diverse Hawaii said little about how Black got along with brown, yellow, and calico. If you are fascinated by Hawaii, diversity, intersectional analyses, how wars uproot trends, etc., then you will enjoy this book. It's quite impressive.

I'm not sure what I expected from this book, but I didn't really find much. Essentially the book

is a brief recap of prostitution in Hawaiâ™i during WWII; a brief, generalized discussion of race in Hawaiâ™i; and a recap of discussions with people who served in Hawaiâ™i and people who lived there then. I already was aware of the fact that prostitution existed and exists in Hawaiâ™i. (If you are male you do not have to venture far in Waikiki to be approached by prostitutes. At least that is the way it was during the 20 years I was stationed there or lived there from 1972 through 2004.) During WWII prostitution was tightly controlled by the police and by the military. If you were a female prostitute, your chances of getting beaten up were far higher with the civilian police than with the military police. The lines were long in the brothels in the Hotel Street area and most of the working women were from San Francisco. Ah, okay. This isnâ™t really a book that breaks any new ground.

**SUMMARY:** facts and interpretation of the effects of WW2 in Hawaii **REVIEW:** The authors interviewed many people, including my father, Anthony Capanna, as they wrote this account of WW2 in Hawaii. Although I think their account is quite accurate (and was grateful they depicted my father as the good/honest/moral person he is), there are parts of the book that are quite graphic as pertaining to the sleazier side of what went on after Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Factual, yes; worth reading, if you need it as a research tool; a bit jolting and base...yes. I don't recommend it for young people.

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