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Advertiser photo by Carl Viti

The fighting was over when Dai Woon Sur, above, arrived at Guadalcanal. He built boards and surfed with other soldiers, right, on the island during World War II.



For some, Guadalcanal a 'South Pacific' scene

Guadalcanal means desperate fighting on bloody beachheads to most World War II veterans about to celebrate V-J Day. Dai Woon Sur is embarrassed to admit that's where he learned to surf.

"This war wasn't only killing and destruction," said the former National Guard platoon sergeant. "We had our fun."

Which explains why Dai Woon's war on Guadalcanal reads like James Michener's "South Pacific" with Hawaiian music, instead of John Wayne's "They Were Expendable" with machine-gun fire.

It wasn't Dai Woon's fault. "We were ready for combat, armed to the teeth," he sighed.

But the battle was over

when his company was assigned to Guadalcanal in January of 1944 to guard Adm. Bull Halsey on the famous atoll. Equipped with guitars, ukuleles and fishhooks, the Hawaiian National Guardsmen pitched tents 15 feet from the beach.

"During the period we were there, it was like a picnic for the local boys," Dai Woon confessed.

He said they built a mess tent using coconut palm trunks for posts, grass and palm thatching for a roof. Every Friday he sent a squad out to catch fish for the company.

"I assigned them a truck and a trailer," he explained. "They patched camouflage nets together and made a *hukilau*. There were so many fish that the squad came back each time with a trailer full.

Our Honolulu

By Bob Krauss



"We'd have a fish fry for the whole company, more than 200 officers and men, on the beach."

For fresh meat, the soldiers built bamboo traps in the jungle and baited them with garbage. When a wild pig entered the cage, a trap door came down.

"We *kalua* the pig," said Dai Woon. "Dig a hole, get rocks from the river bed, light a fire. Two, three hours, the pig is done."

Music came as naturally to the soldiers from Hawaii as fishing, especially to William

Kaupu from Molokai.

The pilots of a bomber group on Guadalcanal had put up a shanty to use as an officers' club where they invited nurses for dances. Men from Dai Woon's platoon played music for the dances in return for free rides in the bombers during training exercises.

One day, a Hawaiian soldier was unloading lumber from a cargo ship when he spotted a piece of plywood about the right size for a surfboard. He borrowed some tools and shaped it.

Surfboard fever swept the Hawaiian encampment on Guadalcanal. Even soldiers who didn't know how to surf, like Dai Woon, made boards. A fellow Korean with an artistic flair, Dai Bok Chun, painted the boards in return for beer.

"Guadalcanal was where I learned to surf," said Dai Woon. "But the surf was only 2 feet high, at the most. About all we did was paddle.

"On Sunday, our day off, we'd paddle four, five miles up the coast. See a school of *aholehole*, chase 'em up on the beach. That's how easy they were to catch. Build a fire and roast the fish on a stick.

"We traded fishhooks to the natives for war clubs. They were friendly but backward. The only way they fished was to spear 'em. The men made the women do all the work."

Dai Woon said he was so eager for battle that he applied for officer's training. He was accepted in November 1944, when he left his surfboard on Guadalcanal and headed for the Mainland. He retired from the service as a major.