

## **The Pasture**

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I'm sure it really was a pasture at one time. I have heard that they used to run cows on it, and at one time someone actually had a horse up there for a while. For the kids in the neighborhood it was the ultimate play area. It was the hilly area behind Punahou School and included Rocky Hill with a tall grass area at the top of the hill with a lot of thorny lantana bushes below Rocky Hill and paralleling Monoa Road. We avoided those areas. On our family's return visit in 1976 the play area was virtually overtaken by the lantana, and the foot trails were gone. What a shame, for it was our world of fantasy and play.

The formal field for playing baseball and "red rover" were relegated to the Halford's back yard which was adjacent to the pasture. The Halford's yard was in reality the top of a former underground water storage tank used by Punahou before they built an above ground steel tank below the hill. The ventilators mushroomed up on each of the four corners of the field and there was an entry hatch of sorts if one wanted to venture down into that dark damp cavernous space via the platform and rusty ladder just under the hatch. That reservoir was to take on a different role after the Army took over Punahou.

At the top of Rocky Hill was, you guessed it, a rock outcropping with a rather sharp drop off to the lantana bushes below on the makai side. That is, toward the sea and Honolulu. At the very top was a concrete slab about eight feet square on which was placed a pipe with two flat perforated sheets of steel at 90 degrees to each other at the top. It was painted red and white and was used for some sort of geographical marker. I never did know what it was for, nor did anyone I knew. It was periodically pulled out of the base by someone with more strength than brains and someone else always put it back, so apparently it had some importance. Adjacent to the slab were a series of holes between the large rocks. When we were small we could creep into these holes and with some additional wiggling, would reach the "cave", an opening in the rocks below the crest of the cliff face of the hill. The cave was open to the face of the cliff and served as a wonderful lookout to the view below without being observed from above. The cave could also be reached by climbing down the cliff from the top, a preference after we all started growing and the threat of getting stuck via the wiggle entrance. After the Army took over Punahou School, they too discovered that this area was a wonderful lookout. They surrounded the hilltop with barbed wire and dug down into the rather soft rock for a small bunk house and lookout post complete with a low level shed and range-finding binocular telescope. The hapless souls that were assigned to duty there were glad to have something to do, so we kids pretty much had run of the place after we got to know them. They

would shoo us out when necessary. Some of us learned some perhaps distorted facts of life from these encounters. Their conversation about women was rather candid to say the least. When the Army abandoned this outpost it was still known by some personnel as a place to bring your girlfriend. Because the area was recessed from ground level one could look down into the main area of the lookout. It was here on one occasion that the neighborhood boys had a first hand view of what one couple had come for. In spite of our bravado, I think we were all embarrassed. One of the less embarrassed spent more time looking, however!

Boys and climbing trees go together, and it was part of our play in the pasture. My typical playmates were the Gartley twins, Dick & Fred, and sometimes Skip Hance and Gordon Linn. The girls in the neighborhood simple were not a part of this play. The kiawe trees are a native hardwood tree with small leaves similar to the locust, long hard bean pods the size of green beans, and of course thorns. The thorns were only found on the ends of the branches and often fell to the ground as the small branches dried out and became brittle. This would not normally be a problem, but one must remember that going barefoot was a way of life, and even at Punahou shoes were only required beginning in the seventh grade. The secret path leading to our tree house was devoid of thorns and the obvious paths through the tall grass we laced with collected thorns to keep kids from other neighborhoods from climbing in our tree house. The tree house was not a single covered structure that one might see in "Our Gang" movies, but rather a series of platforms in a couple of trees. The two tallest platforms were interconnected with the classic tin can telephones.

The term "high-tech" was not in existence at the time, but our efforts to improve the tree house included an elevator to get to the top most level. The side of a wooden packing crate about three to four feet square served as the elevator platform. Large screw eyes were put into each corner to attach the rope harness. It turned out that the ropes from corner to corner were not very long, necessitating standing over the entire contraption. We located some small pulleys to serve as our block and tackle and laced it with the large sash cord that we had. The top pulley was secured to a branch just above the "off-loading" platform. One simply pulled on the rope hand over hand with some possible help from those on the ground. The whole thing was rather unstable, and swung wildly as it ascended up into the tree. On my try, something let loose, causing the rope to be pulled through my hand quickly resulting in a nasty rope burn. The palm of my hand had a quarter inch of raw flesh across it, and because it hurt so much, I don't remember the actual fall to the ground. Because of the difficulty in properly securing the pulley and the stability problems, the project was abandoned.

We didn't call it playing "army", but part of going to the pasture for the most part involved carrying one's BB gun. Shooting from our perches in the trees or from the prewar Rocky Hill was great sport.

We would occasionally shoot doves but most of the time we did not. One of the girls accused us of shooting cardinals, a definite no-no. One of the parents, one Dr. Pete Halford got after us, but we assured him the story was false. Henceforth the tattletale was on our fecal roster. We all knew the admonition of not getting shot in the eye, so we took particular care in our BB gun fights. Only shoot below the waist. Long pants were advisable. And often the bamboo and glass skin diving goggles were worn--glass you say! Instead of using the typical copper clad steel BB's, lead shot was in order. This was so that when hit, the lead streaks would show on your khakis. (Blue jeans were considered work pants, were not popular, and were not allowed at school.)

Another BB gun game involved sitting on the ground in a row and waiting for the inevitable dragon fly to come by. Their habit is to dart about and then hover for a moment before taking off in a different direction. At precisely that moment our battery of BB gunners would open fire hoping to knock this enemy aircraft out of the air. Often as not we would miss, and the curious insect would take off after the low velocity BB. After a few fast cocking and firing sessions, it was up the trail to the crest of Rocky Hill to see what was going on or perhaps to return to the trees.

One day after the Army had taken over, a work party showed up to prepare an area that was to be possibly used as an anti-aircraft position. They cleared a small area and dumped some sand that was to be used for sand bags around the gun emplacement that never came to be. It was next to our sacred tree house location and there was some talk of having to cut some key branches to make an effective emplacement. We talked to the lieutenant in charge and he assured us it would not be necessary after he heard our plea. (We noticed that in lieu of a metal lieutenant's bars, he had embroidered bars on a cloth patch, the first indication of the careful use of metal in these times of war.) Later, when they had finished their task, the trees showed the flat yellow scars of recently trimmed branches----damn them! The small clearing quickly grew back with its tall grass, the Army never returned with any equipment, and the sand pile quickly spread out as it was used as an improvised high jump pit. The Gartley's father had competed in the Olympics as a track and field athlete, and they were surely emulating him. The day that work party left the pasture, the days of tree climbing fantasy were over.

If one walked up Kakela Place and continued into the pasture, just over the crest of the grassy area was a hill leading eventually to Monoa Road. In a section with only tall grass became an ideal hill for sledding. This was not the same as the typical ti leaf sliding on the wet muddy hillsides of the lush mountainous areas inland. This was just sliding on cardboard or sleds with waxed runners going down a hill with tall grass, bending as we made our way down the hill. A loose nail on a home made sled took its toll on my knee on one occasion. In later years the hill would become a worn trail, because of the efforts of Boy Scout troop 1. The grass and brush at the bottom of the hill were cleared away and a

simple barrack like cabin was built. A short drive was cleared so that vehicles could come into the clearing. Neighborhood kids now had an access home from the bus stop on Monoa that was much shorter than walking all the way around via Lanahuli Street. Part of that hill side would later be utilized by the Scout troop for other purposes.

When the Army took over Punahou, all the property that the school owned was fair game. Apparently the Halford's had a deal going with Punahou, so the play area that was the top of the old reservoir belonged to the school. The Army wasted little time digging in a road from the end of Kakela Place over to the end of the reservoir. They had to dig down quite a ways to have the road level with the bottom of the reservoir. From the top to the level of the road used to be a gentle hill, but now there was a concrete lined roadway trench leading to the wall of the reservoir. Two gigantic metal clad doors were put in place after a rectangular hole had been cut out. Meanwhile, the dirt layer on top was scraped away so that a tar paper cover could be laid down. Water had been seeping in for years, dripping down, and leaving small pits in the concrete floor. Once the work had been done, wooden racks were installed to use for vehicle tire storage. Trucks roared up the street for days and days, unloading zillions of tires. I never saw them take any for use in the war effort. They finally were all taken out when Punahou regained the campus from the Army Corps of Engineers. When we returned to Hawaii in 1976, there were some PTA mothers using part of the cavernous space to sort and store goodies for a rummage sale. They were interested in the story of its origin.

The pasture would always be the boyhood play area and have a special place in my growing up. Whatever I was doing in these haunts just a relatively short distance from home, it was always too far for any of the Craig kids to hear their mother's call from the back kitchen door. At first it required Mom to walk across the yard, or send one of us who was at home and sound the car horn with the appropriate number of honks to call the errant child home. Later, because the car horn was muffled by the garage and of its penetrating shrillness, a police whistle was substituted. We all had our proper number of blasts to respond to, and high-tailed it home. It was amusing to the Army guards up on Rocky Hill, but it was effective. Long after we left Hawaii and the pasture, a whistle would again be used to call the new generation of Craig kids home.