



# The Aloha Shirt: Spirit Of The Islands

*Dale Hope*

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## **The Aloha Shirt: Spirit Of The Islands** Dale Hope

The Ultimate Coffee-table Book on the World's Most Famous Souvenir: the Hawaiian Shirt

The Aloha Shirt: Spirit of the Islands is the most colorful and complete book published on the most enduring souvenir ever invented: the Hawaiian shirt.

First developed in the early '30s as a "tourist attraction," Aloha shirts have their roots in the graphic, comfortable clothing that South Seas islanders have been wearing for hundreds of years.

Around 1935, a small-but-daring group of clothing manufacturers in Honolulu hit on the same good idea simultaneously: to make wildly colorful, "air-conditioned" short-sleeved shirts for tourists that would give them an immediate sense of relaxation, and going "Hawaiian." The shirts were also, as one clever Waikiki marketer observed, "Postcards you can wear."

So it has been for more than sixty years, with countless Hawaiian- and Japanese-print shirts designed and sold for the pleasure of millions of people.

The Aloha Shirt traces the splashy history of Hawaiian shirts from their beginnings right after the Great Depression through their popularity with World War II American servicemen and into the "Golden Era" of Hawaiian tourism and garment manufacturing—from 1935 to 1955.

As the book points out, Aloha shirts have been the favorite leisure wear of everyone from twenty-something surfers to presidents such as Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Elvis Presley chose Aloha shirts as the main costume for his movie, *Blue Hawaii*.

Today, Aloha shirts are more popular than ever. From California to Tokyo, hundreds of manufacturers are turning out modern-day shirts costing from \$15 to more than \$100. It's a half-billion-dollar-a-year industry. And shirt collectors at New York auction houses and on eBay on its Web site now pay thousands of dollars for a single rayon "silkie" that cost less than a dollar in 1935.

Lavishly illustrated with hundreds of full color, never-before-published shirt images, vintage black-and-white photographs, and priceless examples of period "Hawaiiana," the book features separate chapters on the innovative artists, risk-taking manufacturers, and silky fabrics behind the success of the world's most famous shirt.

The Aloha Shirt is both a dazzling, fun-to-browse art book, and a fascinating chronicle of the world's love affair with Hawaii.

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