



## SENATOR FRED DYSON

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### **SB 274 – William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery**

The purpose of this bill is to name the new state fish hatchery on Elmendorf Air Force Base, the William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery. Hernandez pioneered the fish rearing and fish hatchery program at Ft. Richardson.

William Jack “Bill” Hernandez served his country valiantly during WWII, serving as a civilian contractor on Wake Island in the South Pacific, building fortifications for USMC personnel. Wake Island was attacked by the Japanese on Dec. 7, 1941, the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack, and a violent 16 day struggle ensued between the Marine regiment and an overwhelming enemy force. On December 23, 1941, Wake Island was captured and Mr. Hernandez was taken as a prisoner of war. He was a POW for three years before being released following surrender of the Japanese forces in 1945.

In 1947 Mr. Hernandez enlisted in the US Army, and in 1956 his unit was transferred to Fort Richardson where he became a Fish and Wildlife Conservation NCO. His orders were to rehabilitate the lakes and streams on post. As a result of Mr. Hernandez efforts, in 1957 the Secretary of the Army approved a cooperative agreement between the Army, the Alaska Territorial Department of Fish and Game, and the Fort Richardson power plant, allowing the plant’s cooling pond to be used for rearing fish. Mr. Hernandez ran the fish rearing project, and annual production reached 12,000 rainbow trout, 100,000 Chinook salmon smolt, and 200,000 Coho salmon smolt.

In 1968 Mr. Hernandez retired from the US Army and received an Army Commendation Medal for his efforts. Shortly after retirement, Hernandez was hired by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as a Fish Culturist at the Fire Lake Hatchery. In a few years he returned to Fort Richardson to manage the large scale fish hatchery constructed at the cooling pond. He also worked at the nearby Elmendorf fish hatchery. In 1983, after 26 years of dedicated service raising salmon and trout, Hernandez retired.

Sadly, Hernandez died of cancer in 2003. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7665 honored him with a 21-gun salute. He was the epitome of Tom Brokaw’s “Greatest Generation.” Without his drive and dedication, the fish rearing project at Fort Richardson would have never gotten off the ground. His life’s work made an enormous contribution to the sport and commercial fishing industry of the Cook Inlet region. Please honor William Jack “Bill” Hernandez by supporting this legislation.

Contact: Chuck Kopp, Staff to Senator Dyson (907)465-6580