

HAWAII VETERAN

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WWII Filipino Veterans Monument Blessing

By Ronald P. Han, Jr.

On a beautiful morning at the Waipahu Public Library on Friday, February 24, 2023 at 10:00 AM, the Filipino Veterans of WWII monument was dedicated with distinguished WWII Filipino Veterans, their families, and members of the community in attendance. This project first began with the passage of House Bill 942

collaborated and discussed what kind of art would honor our veterans as well as the kind of message that needed to be shared with future generations. These members included those who are with us today and those who have passed; Abelina Shaw, Chairperson, Amy Agbayani, Artemio Caleda, Domingo Los Banos, Eva Rose Washburn-Repollo, Narzal & Pelagio Concepcion, Oscar &

Clara Bangui, Espie Ruga Bangui, Clem & Gina Vergara Bautista, Ricardo Trimillos, Wilfredo Tungol, Ron Han, Anita Loando-Acohido, Christine Madayag, Waipahu Public Library Librarian. With the help of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, past Executive Direc-

tor Jonathan Johnson, Interim Executive Director Karen Ewald, Project Manager Kamakani Konia and Alexandra Skees and our amazing artist Kelley Hestir, we now have a monument that we can all be



Photo by Jonathan Kimura

very proud of.

Special appreciation to the Waipahu JROTC Cadets, the Hawai'i Youth Challenge Academy Cadets, Mr. Hari Bayani, our vocalist, Pastor Mark Awa-ao, who provided the invocation and blessing, and WWII Filipino Veterans Oscar Bangui, Faustino Garcia and Artemio Caleda who untied the maile lei.



Pictured with the maile lei are World War II veterans Art Caleda, Oscar Bangui and Faustino Garcia.

Photo by Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

appropriating funds for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts to commission a permanent monument to show Hawai'i's gratitude to our Filipino veterans. Over these past five years, an art advisory committee led by Chair Abelina Shaw met regularly to help bring this project to the library. Together, the art advisory committee



Photo by Jonathan Kimura



Director's Message

Ronald P. Han, Jr., COL USAF (Ret.)
Director State Office of Veterans' Services

Aloha! The Year 2023 is off to a fast and busy start! The State Legislature is in full swing, there has been monumental legislation affecting Veterans with the passage of the PACT Act that has significantly increased our Veteran client contacts and we continue to make great progress in the Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home and capital improvement projects in our cemeteries (Maui and Oahu this year and Kona next year). We have also welcomed many new faces to the Office of Veterans Services (please see pictures of our new staff in this newsletter). Additionally, all eight of our State Veterans Cemeteries went through a comprehensive Compliance Program Review in January and February 2023 conducted by the VA's National Cemetery Administration. Much appreciation to our State and our County counterparts for their efforts to accommodate this in-depth inspection. For our OVS Office operations, we are still employing proven telework and tele-counseling methods, however, we have also been seeing Veterans in the office on an exception basis for those who need special help and assistance.

In October 2022, our State Office of Veterans Services was also asked by US Senator Mazie Hirono to participate with other panel members in addressing Veteran concerns and issues with Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough who was in Hawai'i for a Senate Field Hearing. Secretary McDonough was receptive to the feedback he received that promulgated other important events like the recent Pacific Veterans Experience Action Center, March 1-2, 2023, virtual outreach session with our VBA, VHA, Memorial Services partners. Hats off to Jon Kimura, our new Veterans Services Coordinator who led the State Counselor Corps with supportive services in this noteworthy endeavor. Please plan a head, but an in-person VEAC session is planned for September 2023 here on Oahu. More information will be forthcoming.

Over the horizon, we are doing the early planning and preparation for a 3rd State Veterans Home for Maui. Size, dimension, location, and other important demographics will be shared once more definitive objectives are realized. We are also highlighting the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War this year in some of our special ceremonies like the Governor's Memorial Day Ceremony at

the Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe on Monday, May 29, 2023, at 1:00 PM. Labeled "The Forgotten War," this State and

Nation has never forgotten the sacrifices and dedicated service of our fallen and living Korean War Veterans and their families who have supported them.

We are also receiving some preparatory guidance on the America250 program encouraging each U.S. State and Territory to form its own America250 Commission. In essence, the State will form a Hawai'i Commission on the United States Semiquincentennial, also to be known as the Hawai'i America250 Commission, to plan, promote and implement appropriate public celebrations and official events, programs and commemorations leading up to July 4, 2026. More information will be provided in the upcoming months as this noteworthy program starts up.

In closing, my heartfelt appreciation to each of you for supporting our Veterans and their loved ones! Please continue to take care of one another and stay safe!

50th Anniversary Parade Commemorating the Vietnam War

Story and Photos by:
Bernhard Lashleyidner

Waikiki, Hawai'i – On a cloudy Wednesday afternoon, veterans and civilians gathered on Kuroda field at Fort DeRussy, the former Army base located at the start of Waikiki, to honor the veterans of the Vietnam War with a short ceremony and parade on March 29, 2023.

The ceremony began with the Native American National Anthem, performed by the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara indigenous peoples of Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, North Dakota, who fought during the Vietnam War. The presenting of the colors and playing of the U.S. National Anthem then officially opened the ceremony.

The Master of Ceremony Master Gunnery Sgt. (retired) Earl Hurrey asked the Vietnam Veterans in attendance if they would stand and be recognized; the crowd responded with a loud and thunderous 30 seconds of applause.



Photo of retired COL. Edward Cruickshank and retired CAPT Joel Brilliant, USN, in front of the Purple Heart Medal Float.

“On behalf of the Historic Programs and the Vietnam Veterans Day Committee we salute you,” said Hurrey. “This is the largest event honoring the service and sacrifices of those that served in Vietnam.”

Hurrey remarked that the celebration was to commemorate the events of the past, by saluting those who served and sacrificed on behalf of a



The parade marked the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, one of the most devastating conflicts of the modern area.

grateful nation.

VIPs in attendance were Col. (retired) Gene Castagnetti, Silver Star recipient, Col. (retired) Edward Cruickshank, Hawai'i Army National Guard, State of Hawai'i Representative Adrian Tam, Col. (retired) Allen Au, Rifle Platoon National Guard, Vietnam Veteran Mark Webster and keynote speaker Brig. Gen. Joseph Clearfield, Deputy Commander Marine Forces Pacific.

Hurrey also welcomed all allied nations in attendance, especially members of the former republic of Vietnam.

“As we observe the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, we reflect with solemn reverence upon the valor of a generation that served with honor,” said Clearfield. “We pay tribute to the more than three million service men and women, who left their families to serve bravely a world away from everything they knew and everyone they loved.”

Clearfield remarked on the challenging conditions Vietnam presented, with service members pushing through jungles and rice patties, as well as adverse weather, fighting to protect the ideals we hold close as Americans.

Continued on next page

Vietnam War Parade

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Spectators along the parade route paid their respect by waving flags and cheering veterans and organizations participating in the event, which started at Kalakaua Avenue and ended in Kapiolani park.

Photos by Bernhard Lashleyleidner

“For over a decade of combat over land and sea, these proud Americans upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces,” said Clearfield. “As a grateful nation we honor those 58,000 patriots whose names are now etched on the black granite, who sacrificed all they had, all they would ever have, and all they ever will.”

The ceremony concluded with the President and Director of Historic Programs, Joel Biggs, recognizing the rest of the production team, as well as the audience for attending the 2nd annual National Vietnam Veterans parade.

“Strength comes from diversity,” said Biggs. “The real power and strength happen when a diverse people can come together to be unified; that’s when the magic happens.”

Biggs highlighted the example our veterans set for today’s service members; we are all

the beneficiaries of the service and sacrifices of our veterans. He also remarked on the commitment to honoring Vietnam Veterans again in the future, in Hawai‘i.

“We determined that Hawai‘i would be the place to do it, because this was the gateway for so many departing and returning from war,” said Biggs. He also pointed out that many Vietnam veterans never left Hawai‘i when they returned, because it’s such a special place. Each guest

speaker on the stage received a medallion and flower lei before the parade began.

“We thank you and hope you enjoy the rest of the evening as we march down Kalakaua Avenue,” said Biggs.

The parade included floats, marching bands, military platoons, motorcyclists, classic cars, Hawai‘i Youth Challenge Academy (Kalaeloa) and Junior Reserve Officers Cadets (JROTC), as well as the most important guests of all: Vietnam veterans.

The anniversary was a time for reflection and remembrance, as well as an opportunity to honor those who fought and died in the conflict. It was also a time to recognize the long-lasting impacts of war, both in the United States and in Vietnam, and to work towards reconciliation and healing.



New Employees at OVS



**Adam Troy
"Akamu" Campbell
II**

Adam Troy Campbell II is an Office Assistant at the Tripler Army Medical Center.



Laura Ferreira

Ms. Ferreira is the Office Assistant at the Hawai'i Office of Veterans Services, located at 1304 Kekua-naoa St. #L-102, Hilo.



Jason Sabas

Jason Sabas is a Veteran Services Counselor at the Tripler Army Medical Center.



Carolyn Visoria

Carolyn Visoria is a Veteran Services Counselor at the Tripler Army Medical Center.

New Advisory Board Member



**MSgt Donna
Shimizu (Ret)**

Ms. Shimizu honorably served 35 years with the 291 Combat Communication Squadron, Hawai'i Air National Guard in Hilo. She presently volunteers on multiple State Advisory Councils (SAC) and the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).

New Employees at the Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe



Elizabeth Dalton

Ms. Dalton is the Cemetery Operations Assistant at Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe.



DeAnn Ferreira

Ms. Ferreira is the Office Assistant at Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe.



Donna Yoshimura

Ms. Yoshimura is the Secretary at Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe.

Thank you to the Command Senior Enlisted Leader Zandra Fox and her Hawai'i National Guard Volunteers for cleaning the Vietnam and Korean War Memorials at the State Capitol

Photos by Command Senior Enlisted Leader, Hawai'i National Guard



New Veterans' Services Branch Coordinator



Jonathan Kimura
Veterans' Services Branch Coordinator

Services Branch (VSB) Coordinator for the past 4 months and there is a wealth of information to absorb. Upon embarking on my initial entry training (pun intended), I came across an acronym that was quite elusive at first, the term “VSO.” In time spent researching the acronym, I found two representations which closely relate: **Veterans Service Organization** and **Veterans Service Officer**. As these two representations can be quite confusing, here are the differences I discovered.

Veterans Service Organization: Through the US Code of Federal Regulations, the Veterans Affairs (VA) may recognize organizations for the purpose of assisting claimants for VA benefits in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of their claims. As such, the VA has recognized OVS as a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) that assists Veterans within the State of Hawaii.

Veterans Service Officer: Veteran advocacy is the primary service offered by OVS's VSB with accredited Veterans Service **Officers** (VSOs) also known as Veterans Service Organization **Representatives**. They act on behalf of Veterans, their families, and survivors to secure appropriate rights, benefits, and services. This includes receiving, investigat-

ing, and resolving disputes or complaints. Now that we've examined the differences, how does one become an accredited VSO? Among the many steps involved, employees must complete the VA's **Training, Responsibility, Involvement, and Preparation of Claims** (TRIP) training and obtain a score of 80% or higher on the exam. Once OVS employees obtain the required score, they are deemed accredited VSOs. However, OVS's hurdle is not about employees getting accredited. While also a nationwide issue, the biggest challenge OVS is currently facing is a staffing shortage as we have vacancies state-wide. As you can imagine, without manpower in our VSO ranks, OVS will not be able to service as many Veterans in a timely manner. We greatly apologize for this inconvenience. Thus, my highest priority is to recruit and hire the most qualified candidates to become highly competent VSOs for OVS. We have made significant recruitment headway and hired five new employees since Dec. with the help of the Hawai'i Army National Guard's Work for Warriors Program and the Hawai'i State Dept. of Defense staff. Using the State of Hawai'i's vetting process, OVS will continue to recruit qualified candidates who best fit our organization's needs. VSB is off to a good start in 2023 and we can't wait until we are fully staffed.

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Acronym Learning

Check: “The VA recognized OVS as a VSO with VSB's VSOs within their ranks to serve Veterans and their families.”

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I am proud to be a part of OVS and I look forward to serving our Veteran community in my official capacity as the Veterans' Services Coordinator. I am in awe of the sacrifices made by all Veterans and their families every day. Just as Veterans served their country, OVS's VSB is here to serve the Veterans of Hawai'i. Mahalo nui loa for your sacrifice and service to our country.

Continued on the next page

Veterans' Services Coordinator Background



Jon Kimura

Mr. Kimura began his career with the Hawai'i Army National Guard in 1995. He is currently a Master Sergeant in the G1 Education Office and had previously served

as the First Sergeant for the 111th Army Band for 7 years. In 2020, he was called upon to support the Hawai'i National Guard's COVID-19 response effort and spent 2 years on orders serving in various roles, most notably as the Non-Commissioned Officer In-Charge (NCOIC) of the J1 Personnel section. His civilian employment includes time at the Hawai'i State Department of Health for almost 14 years, where he served as a Human Services Profes-

sional and Quality Assurance Specialist for the Early Intervention Section, Program Coordinator for the Hawai'i Birth Defects Program, and most recently, the Prevention Branch Chief for the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division. Mr. Kimura has since assumed his duties as OVS's Veterans' Services Coordinator from December 2022. He holds a Bachelor of Education degree in Secondary Music and a Master of Science degree in Counseling Psychology.

Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery Updates (Kaneohe)

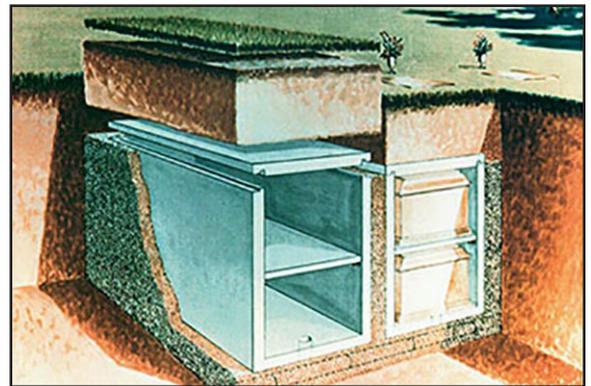
By Robert Lee
Cemetery Operations Manager

The Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery (HSVC) was awarded a \$5.128M grant to fund five separate projects that will enhance and beautify the hallowed grounds of the HSVC, located in beautiful Kaneohe on the island of Oahu.

The first project consists of the installation of 600 precast concrete structures, equaling 1,099 Double Depth Lawn Crypts. A double-depth lawn crypt is a pre-installed concrete burial container pro-

viding two interment spaces in a cemetery. Weighing approximately 3,500 pounds and reinforced with steel rebar, double depth lawn crypts provide protection for casketed remains and preserve the beauty and integrity of cemetery grounds.

The other four portions of the project entail a new security camera system, a new grave locator and entry sign, a new



wash rack and clarifier tank system, renovating our existing committal shelter and landscaping improvements to include drainage improvements as well. The project in its entirety should be completed late summer of 2023.



Photos by Robert Lee

Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home Update

**Photos and Story by:
Tommy Driskill**

After starting construction on our Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home (DKA SVH) in April 2021, the facility is now scheduled for construction completion in December 2023. At that point we will begin equipping, furnishing and staffing with first patient intake by Summer 2024. Once operational, we will have a “state of the art” 120 skilled nursing / intermediate care bed (each w private bath), 130,000 sq ft, two story facility build on 7 acres of land on Kealanani Avenue in Kapolei, Oahu. This facility will offer both long-term and short-term rehabilitation stays plus adult day care for Veterans, eligible spouses and Gold Star parents. Additionally, DKA SVH will be monetarily self-sustaining providing over 150 healthcare related jobs and there will be student internships / rotations with the University of Hawai’i West, local high schools as well as other healthcare training entities here in Hawaii.



Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans State Home Site visit on Jan. 20, 2022.

Over the past two years, the following significant actions have been taken to enhance both the facility and the operation of the facility:

- Working through the Hawai'i State Health Planning and Development Agency (SHPDA), a healthcare Certificate of Need (CON) was approved following a series of public hearings.
- A building permit was finally approved by the City and County of Honolulu Department of Planning and Permitting (DPP).



Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans State Home Site visit on January 20, 2022. Yam Yi Lee, (OVS Administrative Assistant), CAPT Shaoyu Lee (Chief, State DOD Engineer), Tommy Driskill (Healthcare Coordinator OVS), Brad Leveen (DAGS Project Lead), Wade Ishii (Deputy Chief, State DOD Engineer) and Ronald Han, (OVS Director).

- A 99-year Ground Use Lease has been signed with the Hawai'i Housing Finance & Development Corporation (HHFDC).

- Seven Pandemic Design Change Orders have been implemented to ensure that DKA SVH patients will be both safe and secure anticipating a future of unknown virus concerns.

- A full Pharmacy has been added that will enable the facility to utilize the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) best price national prescription medication contracts.

- A Photo Voltaic power generation system is being added via lease payback (no upfront cost) that will

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Daniel K. Akaka Veterans Home



DKA SVH Aerial View shot on March 9, 2023.

generate 50% of the power for the facility at markedly reduced cost.

- An Art Advisory Committee has been formed working under the auspices of the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA), which has commissioned local Hawai'i artist Kai'ili Kaulukukui and Angela Arvai to create six facility front mural panes, each two stories high using four-dimension colored glass that will be lighted at night so DKA SVH will stand out for all to see.

- HB1893 was passed by the 2022 State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor as Act 285 effecting the future transfer of operational oversight responsibility for DKA SVH from Hawai'i Department of Defense (DOD) to Oahu Region, Hawai'i Health Systems Corporation (HHSC).

- A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for operation of DKA SVH has been drafted and is currently in the final signatory process between Hawai'i DOD and Oahu Region, HHSC.

- A Request for Proposal (RFP) for facility contract management has been prepared and will launch in April, 2023 selecting a contract manager to start work in Dec. 2023.

As a follow-on to DKA SVH, a Pre-Application for a third Hawai'i State Veterans Home on Maui will be submitted in April 2023.



DKA SVH Artist Site Visit shot on March 2, 2023.

VA Pacific Islands Health Care System Breaks Ground on New VA Clinic in Kalaeloa

KALAELOA, HI — VA Pacific Islands Health Care System (VAPIHCS) and Hunt Companies Hawai'i marked a milestone today with the groundbreaking for the Advanced Leeward Outpatient Healthcare Access (ALOHA) project in Kalaeloa. Upon completion, the \$120 million, 88,675 square-foot multi-specialty outpatient clinic will provide primary and mental health care, x-ray, laboratory and diagnostic services, a pharmacy, and specialty care for more than 87,000 veterans on O'ahu.

"Today is a momentous one for the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System and the tens of thousands of local veterans we serve," said Dr. Adam Robinson, director of VAPIHCS. "The ALOHA project will allow us to significant-

ly expand the services we offer to our veterans by increasing access to the VA's advanced technology, top providers, and staff who will bring safe, compassionate, quality care to them."

For Hunt, the developer for the state of the art facility and the largest military housing owner in the United States, this groundbreaking signifies its continued commitment to U.S. service members.

"This facility will serve a community with a rich military history, which has been waiting a long time for improved access to health care closer to home," said Steve Colón, President of Hunt's Development Division in Hawai'i and a U.S. Navy veteran.



"The ALOHA project realizes the vision and mission of the late U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka, who worked tirelessly to ensure that our veterans and service members get the support they need where they need it. Hunt is proud to be part of this pivotal moment."

The Veterans Administration awarded the lease to locate the ALOHA project at Kalaeloa in April 2021. The facility is expected to open in late 2023.

Photos by VA Pacific Islands Health Care System



Kahu Danny Akaka blesses the grounds of the new Daniel K. Akaka Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Kapolei with Dr. Adam Robinson, Director of VAPIHCS and community leaders.



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Hawai'i Veteran Newsletter

If you would like the Hawai'i Veteran Newsletter emailed to you, please email ovs@hawaii.gov

Feel free to pass on the newsletter to your friends. Thank you very much for your continued participation.

Mahalo for 40 years of service!

Photo and Story by:
Kelcie Kohara Figueira

Lyndie T. Michioka is born and raised on the Island of Hawai'i near a small town called Honokaa. Her family home was in Kalopa. After being a proud graduate of Honokaa High School, Lyndie attended Kapiolani Community College where she earned her AS Degree in Secretarial Science. Soon after college she began her career as a stenographer for DHS Vocational Rehabilitation office where she worked for 9 years. Throughout her years living on the Oahu, she met and married her husband, Robert Michioka. In 1990 she and Robert moved back to the Big Island and by luck-of-the-draw as Michioka described she got her job at the Office of Veterans' Services in Hilo as an Office Assistant. Since then, she has worked for OVS Hawai'i Island and retired with 40 years of service!

Lyndie fondly recalls her interview at OVS many years ago with past supervisor, Pat Pavao. She shared that Mr. Pavao put her to the extreme test by purposely writing a document illegible and asked all applicants to transcribe on a typewriter. Lyndie was the only applicant to get up and walk over to her future supervisor for clarification and confirmed the words in question. For this act she was hired! She later gone on and



Lyndie T. Michioka

served under six supervisors at OVS during her tenure at the Hilo office.

Throughout her years of service Lyndie has provided exceptional support to our office, as a mentor to other office staff and kind ear to veterans. It was always a good atmosphere at the office with her vibrant humor like when she never fails to lighten the mood with impersonations. Lyndie left her mark on the HOVS healing wall with this take away, "be patient, trust your journey, and follow your dreams. Live-Love-Laugh."

Today Lyndie is enjoying retirement to its full extent with plans to travel, gardening, and spending time with her cat Rusty. Mahalo Nui Loa Lyndie for your incredible years of service to our office; best wishes on your new adventure in retirement!