



Veterans Cemetery needs expansion, contractor

By Kim Eaton
West Hawaii Today
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The money is available -- the challenge is finding someone willing to do the job.

The state is seeking bids for the expanding the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery (WHVC) south burial area, and contractors have until June 28 to submit proposals.

The job, estimated to cost between \$500,000 and \$1 million, generally consists of excavation, backfill and establishing turf over the new area. There will be a pre-bid meeting and a state-conducted site visit 9 a.m. Wednesday at the cemetery's parking lot.

"We have the funding, it's just finding someone to do the work," said Keith Ribbentrop with the Hawaii Office of Veterans Services, Hawaii branch. "If we can't find anyone to perform, the feds will pull the funding."

While the bid has only been out about a week, Ribbentrop's concerns come from a similar situation that occurred last year. A project went out to bid -- placing concrete grave liners -- but there were no bids. The money was reallocated to the cemetery's master plan, instead of being used on improvements, Ribbentrop said.

Expanding the Cemetery

The burial site expansion is but one phase of the cemetery's master plan and the only phase that has been approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The next phase, which area veterans hope to have completed by Veterans Day next year, is construction of a committal shelter, additional landscaping and, hopefully, a restroom.

John Grogan, president of WHVC Development and Expansion Association, said the VA has plans to spend \$3 to \$5 million on short-term cemetery improvements and expansion.

"I'm very optimistic," Grogan said. "We very much appreciate the forward thinking of all those involved."

Grogan stressed, however, that the money was planned but not committed.

"We have the funding, it's just finding someone to do the work. If we can't find anyone to perform, the feds will pull the funding" -- Keith Ribbentrop

While the state is still pushing for the VA to approve the other phases, the burial site expansion was a priority as the cemetery was running out of burial plots, said the former director of the state Office of Veterans Services (OVS).

Based on the approximate 17,000 veterans on the Big Island, an informal study completed last year revealed that 2,818 West Hawaii veterans will die during the next 20 years. Of those, 564 want to be buried at the WHVC; 282 spouses would also like to be buried at the cemetery.

The new burial area will have 253 double depth casket plots to provide for double interment of husband and wife. Another area of expansion would develop 202 cremains plots, Grogan added.

"What the veterans have done in Kona with the community support, it's been fabulous," the former director said. "But the things we're doing, (the veterans) just can't do on their own. They need money from the VA to expand the cemetery."

Federal Funding Constraints

However, it has been difficult to secure funding from the VA as there is only \$32 million committed for all state cemeteries, Ribbentrop said.

"The expansion of the WHVC will happen, it's just happening slowly," he said.

Despite challenges in finding federal funding, there has been a good deal of work completed at the cemetery through community support and

contributions. From fencing and an irrigation system to thousands of plants and columbarias, area businesses, schools and volunteers have worked hard to improve the WHVC.

"There's no question about it. When we first started working on this, we heard comments that people didn't want to be buried there, but now there's been a change in attitude," said Herb Lum, Korean War veteran. "All you have to do is see how it was before. It was a rock-strewn, weed-covered burial field. That's why it was called Boot Hill. It really looked terrible."

However, some, like Lum, are slightly less optimistic that the projects will actually happen in the near future.

"There's been talk all along of money being put aside for different projects, but not much activity has taken place," he said.

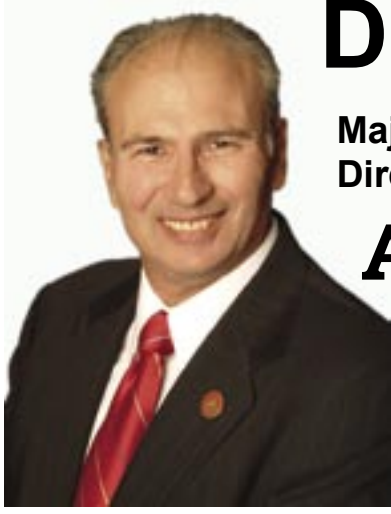
Kona Veterans Cemetery gets grant from VA

Office of Veterans Services
State of Hawaii
459 Patterson Road
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Photo by Carswell "Caz" J. Ross Jr.

On Aug. 28, at the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery located in Kona was granted \$743,035 in federal funds. Col. (Ret.) Gene Castagnetti, USMC (far right), VA representative presented a check to the Office of Veterans Services Dir. Mark Moses (holding check) with Brig. Gen. Gary Ishikawa, the Dep. Adj. Gen. and Sen. Daniel Akaka, VA Committee Chair. The grant will be used to maintain and expand the cemeteries' in Kona.



Director's Message

**Maj. (Ret.) Mark S. Moses, U.S. Marine Corps
Director, State Office of Veterans Services**

Aloha, I am Mark Moses and I am extremely proud to have been given the opportunity to serve as your new Director of the Office of Veterans' Services (OVS).

While working at OVS, many of you have asked about my background. I would like to share the following with you.

After graduating from high school and before beginning college, I enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on Jan. 31, 1967. I was an air control/anti-aircraft weapons electronics operator and was eventually promoted to staff sergeant and on the gunnery sergeant list when I earned my college degree in physics through the Naval Enlisted Scientific Education Program (NESEP), and accepted a commission as a Marine second lieutenant.

After earning my flight officer wings I became an electronic warfare officer and mission commander in EA-6A and (later after transition training) EA-6B tactical jet aircraft operating ashore and aboard aircraft carriers. Because of my mustang status and previous enlisted grade, my call sign became "Gunny".

After tours from Southeast Asia to Asia to Europe, on and over the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and in at least 10 States,

I retired in 1991 with nearly 25 years as a major and returned to my Makakilo (now part of Kapolei) home on Oahu.

I worked in Hawaii as a senior systems engineer, Computer Sciences Corporation, Applied Technologies Division, Arlington Va., and as their senior project engineer at Pacific Missile Test Center/Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMTC/PMRF), Barking Sands, Kauai.

I became increasingly involved with community and service organization. In 1994, my wife and I led a petition drive to form a new neighborhood board on the Ewa Plains because the new Second City of Kapolei was being born. I ran for and was elected to this board and served until elected to the House of Representatives in 1996 where I served until 2006.

I am married and live with my wife Kyoung Soon (Suk) Moses, and children Michael (New Mexico Tech), Matthew (Kapolei High School), and twins Madelyn and Mitchell (Kapolei Middle School).

Both my eldest daughter Michelle (USNR), and son James (former USN), live in California with their families. My eldest son, Jon (USA) died while a member of the 45th Support Group, Schofield Barracks.

Now that I've shared my background, I would like to address some initiatives I believe will allow the Office of Veterans' Services to improve services to Hawaii's veterans.

New Faces at OVS

We have hired an information specialist, Jayme Sato. She will prepare regular and special editions of the Hawaii Veteran newsletter, redesign and maintain an up-to-date informative and exciting website, inform the media and public of veteran's events and activities, and will chronicle and photograph them.

We also hired a clerk, Ina Wienecke, for our Veteran Services Branch at the main OVS office at Tripler Hospital. She has improved our capability to assist veterans by filing and retrieving client's case files and Form DD214s, responding to visitors questions, and greeting and routing clients to counselors or other service providers.

In addition, we hired a temporary counselor for our Maui Office, and have completed on-site training for our "roving counselor", John Condello, who is located at the main OVS office. Together with our Oahu, Kauai and Big Island counselors, our Veteran Services coordinator leads a dedicated team to serve our veterans statewide.

The final service we provide our veterans and their families is interment in a veteran cemetery with decorum and appropriate honors. Veterans deserve a final resting place complete with perpetual care. In adherence to best burial practices, we have begun procuring Burial Vaults for use in all burials in Veterans Cemeteries statewide. The use of vaults helps maintain the aesthetics of the grounds and makes it safer for visiting loved ones, with less maintenance used for leveling. Maintenance personnel can devote more time to grooming the cemetery grounds.

OVS PROJECTS

I. Neighbor Island Veterans Cemeteries

Completed Veteran Cemetery projects

- Kauai Veterans Cemetery, Phase I
- Molokai's Hoolehua Veterans Cemetery
- Lanai Veterans Cemetery
- Maui's Makawao Veterans Cemetery
- East Hawaii Veterans Cemetery No. 1 & 2, Phase I

Kauai Veterans Cemetery (in progress)

- Construction has started on the new columbarium.
- The contractor is slightly behind schedule; however, he/she is still scheduled to complete the project before the end of October so we meet the goal of having the columbarium completed before the Veterans' Day ceremony.

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Phase IIB (in progress)

- Completed setting up the Direct Deposit account to receive the VA grant (\$743,000).
- Construction will start in October 2007. Construction permits have been acquired from the Kona permitting office.
- A decision was made to completely abandon development of the Phase IIC work on the south side of the cemetery, based on the adamant position

by the VA to develop the north side of the property.

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Phase IIC (in progress)

- The Preliminary Revised Master Plan is being prepared by the consultant and will be submitted to the VA for review and approval.
- Subject to the VA's approval of the Preliminary Revised Master Plan, the scope for Phase IIC can be confirmed.

Additional cemetery projects needed:

- OVS will initiate applying for additional state funds that will be eligible for 100% Federal reimbursement from the VA. The funding will be used for niche space for Hoolehua Veterans Cemetery on Molokai, Hilo Hawaii, and Hanapepe, Kauai in the upcoming Legislative session.

II. Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery, Oahu

- Slope stabilization behind the existing columbarium and construction of 2036 new columbarium niches.
 1. FY2008 - \$200K, and FY2009 - \$1M for additional columbarium niches.
 2. FY2008 - \$300K for miscellaneous renovations and improvements.

III. GWOT State Memorial

- Appropriation has been transferred to DAGS as expending agency.
- DAGS has worked with DOD to select the Architect and Engineering firms for the project.
- Next we will set up the selection committee to provide guidance for them to determine the design and concept of the monument.
- MG Lee has designated OVS Director Mark Moses as the chair of this committee.

IV. Veterans Centers

- Oahu Veterans Center Phase 1 & 2 complete, fund raising for phase 3.
- Molokai Veterans Center, state grant received for planning and design.

V. Report on Cemeteries and Memorials/Administrative Rules Public Hearings

- Starting process of traveling to each Cemetery and Memorial to catalog status and repair needs.
- Public Hearings for changes to Hawaii Administrative Rules will occur in conjunction with visits.

VI. Veterans Needs Survey

- Per legislative request the OVS will be conducting

a review of needs for Hawaii's veteran community and present these findings for consideration of legislative action.



Our OVS Director leaving no footprints during the final inspection of the Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home.

Photo by Keith Ribbentrop



Photo by Jayme Sato

Veterans Home Grand Opening

The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home had its grand opening in Hilo on Nov. 12. Guests were treated to tour of the facility.

The Yukio Okutsu State Veterans Home is the first and only veterans home in Hawaii.

The home has been accepting applications from veterans across the state. The following criteria for admission to the veterans' home are:

Applicant must be a veteran in good standing and meet general eligibility for VA benefits.

Applicant should be either a resident of the State of Hawaii prior to his/her induction into the military, and/or a resident of the State of Hawaii for more than one year prior to consideration of his/her application.

Interested veteran applicants should contact the home's administrator, Neil Oyama at (808) 927-0950.

New Amputee rehabilitation center opens at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

By Steve Vogel
Washington Post, Sept. 13, 2007

WASHINGTON - With the fanfare of military music and a jump by paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division scheduled to mark the event, the Army will open a new amputee center today at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in an attempt to better rehabilitate the troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who have lost arms and legs.

The \$10 million state-of-the-art center at Walter Reed, whose campus is set to close in 2011, features virtual reality rehabilitation equipment, a gait laboratory to help veterans with prosthetics walk and run and a two-story rock-climbing wall - all tailored to get troops back on active duty or on with their lives as civilians.

The facility, the Military Advanced

Training Center, also represents an attempt to rehabilitate Walter Reed's image, which was battered after disclosures of poor long-term care for injured veterans.

The base will not close

The decision to build the amputee center predates the controversy that erupted in February as well as the determination

in 2005 by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to close Walter Reed and consolidate it with the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

The project won a hearty endorsement from Staff Sgt. Ramon Padilla, an injured Army soldier touring the facility Wednesday. "Screw the expenses," he said. "Do what you have to do to help soldiers recover better and to have a healthy life."

Plans for the 31,000-square-foot center

were authorized in 2004 after wounded troops started returning from Iraq, but the project was nearly canceled the next year after the decision to close Walter Reed.

"This building, quite frankly, was almost not built," said Elihu Hirsch, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. But after much debate, the Army concluded that it could not wait four years for medical facilities to open in Bethesda and at Fort Belvoir.

Padilla, 32, was serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Afghanistan in July when he was wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade that severed his left arm and cracked his skull, leaving him with a traumatic brain injury. His left arm has been fitted with a prosthesis.

"People can't wait to use the facility," he said.

Padilla, who said he hopes to return to active duty and would need to requalify with his weapon, was eager to try the weapons simulator.

"Screw the expenses, do what you have to do to help soldiers recover better and to have a healthy life."

--Staff Sgt. Ramon Padilla

Veterans Affairs News Updates

Veteran saves a life

On June 26, 2007, Roy Wiginton a disabled Vietnam Veteran and his wife Janet were unpacking boxes in their new home. Steve Adams was volunteering his time to help haul the furniture to their new home. Steve was the last volunteer to leave the Wiginton home. As Steve went to say goodbye, he noticed that Roy was bleeding from below his amputated knee.

Steve had Roy grab his neck and pulled him out of the electric wheelchair. Steve lay Roy on the floor and applied a pressure dressing on Roy's knee to stop the bleeding.

Without Steve's pressure dressing, Roy

might have bled to death. Steve wanted to remind all veterans that, "Everyone needs to know first aide." And hopefully you remember your first aide training.

Korean War Veterans, would you like to visit Korea?

If you are a Korean War veteran who served in Korea between June 25, 1950 and Oct. 15, 1954, you may be eligible to participate in the ROK government-sponsored 2008 Korea Revisit Program. For information, call or write to: Harrison Lee 45-1114 Maka St., Kaneohe, HI 96744, Phone: 235-5713, Fax: 247-2101, or email: magnum44@hawaii.rr.com.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the Hawaii Veteran newsletter please mail your address to OVS at 459 Patterson Rd., E-Wing, Rm. 1-A103, Honolulu, HI 96819-1522. For any change of address please include both old address and new address.



Hawaii Veteran

State of Hawaii Department of Defense

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News from Kaua'i

This is the second of a series of articles in the Hawaii Veteran to keep you abreast of events, activities or other news of interests on the Garden Island. Veterans are encouraged to join one of the 14 veteran organizations on the island. The organizations are the Club 100, 442nd Infantry, American Legions Posts 2, 51 and 54, Disabled American Veterans, Marine Corps League, Kauai Merchant Marines, Kauai Veterans Club, Kauai Vietnam Era Veterans, Korean War Veterans, Military Intelligence Service, Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. If you are interested, call Johnny at 245-1625 and he will arrange for the organization to contact you.



GAVEL HAND OFF - Former Vice Commander Edward Kawamura (left) shaking hands with Commander Edward Keoho Sr. (right).

New council officers

The Kauai Veterans Council elected new officers who started their reign on July 1. The officers are Commander Edward Keoho Sr., Vice Commander Richard Kashiwabara, Secretary Wayne Soma and Treasurer Bill Honjiyo. The council consists of representatives from the 14 veteran organizations on the island.



OPERATION MILITARY APPRECIATION FAMILY DAY
Tony Elliot, OVS (left), Kelly Joyce, Miss Kauai Veteran 2006-2007 and Capt. Aaron L. Cudnohufsky, the commander of the Pacific Missile Range Facilities.



Retired Lt. Col Bill Honjiyo visits with returning Iraq veterans. (left to right) Spc. Jose Manzano Sr., Sgt. Rey Carnate, Lt. (Ret.) Bill Honjiyo and Sgt. 1st Class Chris Callo.

Kauai Museum

The council has appointed Larry Schlang to head a revitalization effort of the Veterans Museum. Larry needs a museum committee to establish goals and objectives and again get the museum doors open to the public. Tour guides, curators, committee members and an administrative staff are needed.

The museum contains important military history information with exhibits that focus on the contributions of the military veterans on the island. These include exhibits and contributions of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Korean War, Vietnam War and other veteran organizations. If you are willing to volunteer, call Larry at 826-4417 or email him at: lhschlang@hawaiiantel.net.

Update on Columbarium

The County and DAGS have executed a letter of agreement that allowed DAGS to design and manage the project. The design has been completed and was advertised for bids in July. The opening is in August and DAGS anticipates awarding a construction project by Aug. 24 with a completion date of October 31.

Operation Military Appreciation

The first military appreciation family festival was held in Puhii on July 1 and was sponsored by the Sons of Kauai Motorcycle Club and coordinated with Tony Elliot from the Office of Veterans Affairs.

The festivities started at 10 am when over 200 cyclists had a motorcycle rally that started from Puhii Park to the Western part of the island and returned for the formal ceremony at noon. The family festival had potluck and activities following the ceremony.

During the ceremony, Elliot recognized five Kauai soldiers who were Missing in Action (MIA) during the Korean conflict. With the exception of Pfc. Takeshi Sasaki, Elliot was unable to locate family members of Sgt. Jose Balalong, Cpl. Sidney Kauai, Cpl. Mitsuyoshi Ishida and Cpl. Mune Yaka..

Mrs. Akiyo Matsuyama, sister of Pfc. Sasaki and on behalf of her family that included a brother and three sisters present, accepted the United States Flag and the Purple Heart Medal from Captain Aaron L. Cudnohufsky, the Commander of the Pacific Missile Range Facilities.

Special guests at the ceremonies were Dan Haggerty of TV show Grizzly Adams and Branscombe Richmond, host of Good Morning Hawaii.

During the solemn ceremonies, the crown remained hushed and it was obvious that the hearts of many in attendance were touched. Over-

heard and stated by a lady watching the ceremony was the statement "it made me cry".

The closing words of Elliot reached out to those in attendance.

"In closing, we offer each of you a simple way to thank a Veteran. It doesn't involve a narrator or special program, a parade or a grand event such as today. Simply offer them your hand and thank them for their service. It is the best way for you to let them know, that you recognize their patriotism and that their sacrifices have not been forgotten.

Today, we thank all generations of veterans - veterans who have fought to keep freedom safe in America, - and veterans who have fought to extend that freedom around the world.

We thank those who are serving now and we look forward to their safe return. We also thank the families of veterans - you are not recognized nearly enough for the hardships you endure. You too are making sacrifices in the name of freedom and we want to thank you for your courage.

As long as our country stands, we know that our young men and women will be called to take up arms to protect us. As long as there are men and women who are willing to stand up and serve, - we must always be willing to stand up and honor their service."

Public Hearings for OVS

Public Notice

The State of Hawaii, Office of Veterans Services (OVS) is planning a public hearing at

KAUAI

Kauai Veterans Center, 3215 Kapule Highway, Lihue, on Mon., Jan 7, 2008 from 9am to 12 pm.

HILO

Benjamin Franklin Building Council County Room, 333 Kilauea Ave., Hilo, on Thur., Jan. 10, 2008 from 9am to 12pm.

MAUI

Maui Cameron Center, 95 Mahalani St., Wailuku on Mon., Jan. 14, 2008 from 9am to 12pm.

LANAI

Hale Kupuna Social Hall, 1144 Ilima Ave., Lanai City, on Tues., Jan. 22, 2008 from 9am to 12pm.

MOLOKAI

Molokai Veterans Center, 145 Ala Malama Ave., Kaunakakai, on Thur., Jan. 24, 2008 from 9am to 12pm.

KONA

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery in Kona, 72-3245 Queen Kaahumanu Hwy., on Fri., Jan. 25, 2008 from 9am to 12pm.

OAHU

Oahu Veterans Center, 1298 Kukila St., Small Conference Room on Mon., Jan. 28, 2008 from 9am to 12pm.

The purpose of this hearing is to conduct public meetings concerning rulemaking affecting local veterans including:

- Rules & Regulations concerning burial in Hawaii State Veterans cemetery in Kaneohe;
- Use of Burial Vaults at all Hawaii veterans cemeteries;
- WWII Fil-Am Veterans Burial Benefits (Act 100)

If you are not able to testify in person, you may submit your testimony by fax at (808) 433-0385 or email hiaina@vba.va.gov no later than 24 hours in advance. Testimonies should have your name, address and telephone number. For additional information you may contact the OVS office at (808) 433-0423.