

HAWAII VETERAN

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Blessing and Groundbreaking for Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home

By Thomas M. Driskill
State Veterans Home Liason

I am both excited and delighted to share with you that on Memorial Day, May 31, 2021, MG Kenneth Hara, The Adjutant General, State of Hawai'i, hosted Governor David Ige, City and County of Honolulu Mayor Rick Blangiardi, Congressional Representative Ed Case, members of the Daniel K. Akaka family and many other dignitaries including a number of distinguished Veterans in Kapolei, Oahu, for subject event.

The sky was clear and the trades were calm as MG Hara stepped up to the microphone and welcomed our guests to this hallmark event signifying a recognition of appreciation for our approximately 117,000 Veterans living in Hawai'i, of which approximately two thirds reside on Oahu. Governor Ige, accompanied by First Lady Dawn Ige, signaled this as a day we shall always remember for our Veterans whom we shall never forget. Members of the



Entrance view - Rendering of the first State Veterans Home on Oahu.

Akaka family lead by Senator Akaka's wife Millie, son's Kahu Danny Akaka Jr. and Alan blessed this ground and shared their blessing with those present on behalf of all Veterans in Hawai'i.

Following the comments and blessings, a select number of government, contractor and Veteran representatives broke ground on what is to be Hawai'i's second State Veterans Home (SVH) named after our beloved Senator Daniel K. Akaka. The first Hawai'i SVH was opened in Hilo on the Big Island as a 95-bed facility in 2007. Our Akaka SVH will be a 120 bed, 130,000 sq ft facility build on 7 acres of land on Kealanani Avenue in Kapolei, Oahu. It will offer skilled nursing and intermediate care facility beds to provide long-term care services plus geriatric mental health/dementia/Alzheimer's care, rehabilitation therapies, hospice, respite and adult day care. This Kapolei facility will target both long-term and short-term stay Veteran populations, eligible spouses and Gold Star parents, thus reducing the current long-term care burden



Governor David Ige spoke to the dignitaries and guests about Daniel K. Akaka's accomplishments and commitment to veterans.

Photo by Jayme Nagamine

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Director's Message

Ronald P. Han, Jr., COL USAF (Ret.)

Director State Office of Veterans' Services

Aloha! Your State Office of Veterans' Services has had another busy quarter supporting our Veterans and their families! The COVID-19 pandemic has created many different opportunities for how our staff can better serve those who served our Nation, but at the same time, safeguard and protect both our Veterans and State personnel while staying fully functional. Although we have not resumed face-to-face sessions for disability claims processing and family pre-orientation sessions in the cemetery, our six offices and our Hawai'i State Veterans Cemetery at Kaneohe have not closed their doors to serving our clients utilizing tele-counseling and virtual mediums like Teams and Zoom. Even our Board of Veteran Appeals Hearings, our outreach sessions to Veterans Organizations and the community at large have all gone virtual. Use of these mediums has provided a significant increase in the number of contacts, our claims processing and supportive services we provide over the previous fiscal year. We have also seen a high spike in new Veterans requesting services from our offices. As we continue to endeavor, we appreciate your patience and understanding of how we are creatively meeting our requirements... as the mission to serve our Veterans remains our most important goal and objective.

The Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home has broken ground and was blessed befittingly on Memorial Day 2021. The event was live-streamed thanks to our superb State DOD Public Affairs Staff headed by Jeff Hickman and his highly talented videographer Andrew Jackson since pandemic social gathering mandates and restrictions were in effect. We were very honored to have Mrs. Millie Akaka, spouse of the late US Senator Akaka along with her children play integral roles in this

special ceremony. We also honored one Veteran from every campaign since WWII to represent all Veterans at this most auspicious occasion. Please read Tommy Driskill's front page article.

On that same day, the 111th Army Band of the Hawai'i Army National Guard led by Bandmaster CWO4 Curtis Hiyane, performed a special virtual concert that was perfectly arranged to honor and pay tribute to our military members, our Veterans and their families. Many of our Guardsmen both Air and Army, including members of the 111th, have been doing triple duty supporting pandemic support at the airports, social tracing, providing natural disaster relief and even some were deployed to protect our Nation's Capital. Once again, this virtual concert video was expertly put together by Jeff Hickman and Andrew Jackson.

Our Second State Veterans Summit was also conducted from June 22- July 27, 2021. This virtual State Veterans Summit was held in partnership with American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Hawai'i State Summit Planning Committee and with the State Office of Veterans Services. Each week a special topic of interest to Veterans was presented virtually with subject matter experts in healthcare, Veteran benefits and in legislative issues. The final session featured former US Army Soldier and Iraqi War Campaign Veteran Jessica Lynch, who was also a Prisoner of War from that same campaign. Special kudos to the State Planning Committee headed by Chair; Carlos Santana, Vice Chair; Dr. David Brown; AARP Staff; Jackie Boland, Gerry Silva, Vicki Franco and Craig Gima for a job well done.

Please continue to stay safe and to take care of one another! It's what we do best! On behalf of our entire OVS Ohana, mahalo and a hui hou!

Office Updates from the Hilo OVS

**By Kelcie K. Figueira
Veterans Service Counselor**

Aloha Ka kou, as a local Big Island girl born and raised in Hilo, I recognized my calling at an early age and that was to give back to my community and help others in need. The enjoyment of helping others has followed me through every step in my career and that is something I will continue to strive to do at the Office of Veterans' Services (OVS).

Since taking the helm as supervisor for the Big Island, it has been our mission to continue providing diligent service to all veterans at OVS. It has been said, "helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person." That has never been more vital as we do business in this field as public servants. It has been a foundation of my work ethic while serving my early years here with OVS and I will keep on doing so as the leader for the Big Island. Our office is a critical resource in the community. If we are unable to assist a veteran with his or her needs, we will refer to someone who will be able to help.

During the COVID-19 pandemic our office doors may have been closed to public traffic, but our staff has shown tremendous dedication by coming in the office space to support our clients 5-days a week via Telecommunication. Our workload

has not slowed down as many other businesses and organizations had during the pandemic shutdown, instead ours has tripled in caseload numbers. This increased volume in our caseload does set challenges with a small staff of two veterans' services counselors and one office assistant island-wide. With our growing clientele volume our office may take anywhere between two to three weeks to process any claim requests at this time. Despite our small staff we are still conducting business in good spirits and able to tackle the caseload with much ease moving forward.

As a friendly reminder, if you are looking to become enrolled in the vehicle registration waiver program, please mail the following to our local OVS mailing address:

1. A copy of your benefits summary letter;
2. Your vehicle registration information;
3. Contact telephone number if we should have any questions while processing your request.

It may take anywhere between 7 to 10 business days to process any vehicle registration waiver request. Please plan accordingly to your needs.

If you are looking to schedule an I.D. card appointment, we recommend you call in advance to schedule your appointment with the I.D. card

division next door to our office. We are not able to schedule or in-charge of these appointments, you may contact the I.D. card division at 808-844-6601 for scheduling.

Lastly our office greatly appreciates all of you for your patience and understanding as we continue to practice social distancing measures. We are all getting through this together. Currently our Hilo and Kona locations remain closed and suspends all in-office visits until further notice, but we are available for a tele-appointment.

The best way to get information to our Big Island offices is to mail information to our local mailing address: Hilo Office of Veterans' Services, 1304 Kekuanaoa St. #L-102, Hilo, HI 96720-4568.

We may also be contacted by telephone at 808-369-3538 if you have any questions or concerns. If you would like to speak to a VSC, please don't hesitate to contact us via telephone to schedule a tele-appointment.

Mahalo Nui Loa!



Kelcie K. Figueira

Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home



State Veterans Home graphic rendering from an aerial point of view looking down.

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at state public/private facilities. Additionally, this new facility will provide 150 to 200 healthcare related jobs and there will be both internships and rotations with the University of Hawai'i West as well as local high schools.

Like the first State Veterans Home in Hilo, the Akaka SVH is being constructed as a self-sustaining entity. Revenue projections based on multiple variables predict a positive return yearly after the first year of operation. Construction is scheduled for completion in

April 2023 with the Akaka SVH opening for patients in October 2023. Following the Akaka SVH, we hope to have the opportunity to assess another neighbor island to design/plan/construct another SVH to further support our neighbor island Veterans. Preliminary discussions are now underway considering Maui as the potential site for a third Hawai'i SVH.



Thomas M. Driskill



Daniel K. Akaka Family; In the middle is Governor David Y. Ige, Mrs. Daniel K. Akaka. At the very right end is Kahu Kordell Kekoa.

Photo by Jayme Nagamine

HSVC thanks their Volunteers



Members of the Hawaii National Guard's 154th Mission Support Group apply some elbow grease in cleaning the headstones of some of our grave sites within the HSVC.



It's a family affair as members of the Hawaii National Guard's 154th MSG make it a "All in the Ohana" effort to clean markers at the grave sites of our fallen heroes.



Members of the 201st Intelligence Squadron of the Hawaii Air National Guard is hard at work scrubbing headstones within the grounds of the HSVC.



Two Hawaii Air National Guard members of the 201st IS beautify one of our fallen hero's grave site at the HSVC.



201st IS members ensure the grave sites at the HSVC are clean and neat for the visitors.

New OVS Employee



Anne Matute is the new Veterans' Services Counselor at the Tripler OVS Office. She is a graduate of Chaminade University with a Master's degree in Education with a focus in Special Education. Before working for OVS, she worked as a Disability Counselor and Special Education teacher.

For Captain Lawrence R. “Larry” Oliveira: for the Vietnam Memorial Wall

By Julia Oliveira Payton

“No bullet, no shell, no demon in hell, shall break this bond called “brothers.”

In gratitude of their father’s Army buddies, the daughters of Captain Lawrence “Larry” Robert Oliveira embarked on a journey three years ago that was often described as “an uphill battle.” Their father’s name Capt. Lawrence R. Oliveira name was added to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in September 2020. His name was omitted from the Wall when erected, since he did not die in Vietnam. In recent years, the Department of Defense (DOD) granted a few exceptions if the cause of death was directly related to shrapnel wounds sustained in Vietnam. The DOD has authorized less than 75 exceptions since its inception in 1982. After an extensive review of his military and medical records, Capt. Oliveira name was inscribed alongside his soldiers & fellow heroes on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington D.C.

Capt. Oliveira, raised in Nāhiku, Hana, Maui, joined the Hawai’i Army National Guard in 1962, (Company C, 1st Battalion, 299th Infantry), a year prior to his high school graduation. The 1963 St. Anthony High School graduate successfully completed Officer Candidate School (OCS) in



Captain Lawrence R. Oliveira

1966 and joined the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, 196th Brigade (currently known as 25th Infantry “Tropic Lightning”) stationed at Schofield Barracks. Capt. Oliveira was deployed to Vietnam and served in the combat infantry division. Capt. Oliveira was injured in May 1969. He returned home to Hawai’i with permanent disabilities from injuries sustained in combat. Capt. Oliveira later died in May 1974 on his 29th birthday at Tripler Army Medical Center.

The amazing part of this story is that it is well-known that no one can break the bond Veterans forge with each

other. For this family, it’s still strong 50 years later. Their quest to add their father’s name started with a phone call from their Uncles Thomas Duarte and Mel Ozeki. These three Army brothers had completed Officer Training School together in 1966. After the war—and the death of Capt. Oliveira—Capt. Duarte returned to Maui and later retired as the Chief of the Maui Fire Department and Lt. Col. Mel Ozeki moved to Las Vegas and launched the ‘Ohana Magazine and later retired to Panama. Two years ago, after a search of names on the Vietnam Wall, Lt. Col. Ozeki reached out to Capt. Duarte to inquire why Larry’s name was not listed. This led to both Capt. Duarte & Lt. Col. Ozeki reaching out to Larry’s daughters to encourage them to petition the DOD, because they both felt strongly that Larry’s courage and sacrifice made in fighting

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Lt. Col. Melvin S. M. Ozeki



Capt. Thomas “Tommy” W. Duarte



Office of Veterans' Services
State of Hawai'i
E-Wing, Room 1-A103
459 Patterson Road
Honolulu, HI 96819-1522

Gov. David Y. Ige
Commander in Chief

Maj. Gen. Kenneth S. Hara
The Adjutant General

Col.-R Ronald P. Han, Jr.
OVS Director

Jayme Nagamine
Editor/Layout

<http://dod.hawaii.gov/ovs>
Email: ovs@hawaii.gov
433-0420 (OVS)
433-0385 (OVS fax)

Captain Lawrence R. “Larry” Oliveira

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for our country deserved this highest recognition and honor.

Capt. Oliveira was also awarded the Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 4 bronze service stars, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with Device, Expert Badge with Rifle Bar, and Republic of Vietnam Cross with Palm Unit Citation. Five years ago, his wife, Hazel Makahilahila Oliveira, passed on and is now buried next to him at the Maui Veterans Cemetery in Makawao.

that Heals.” And for his five daughters, Lisa, Momi, Julie, Judy, Laurie, and his sister,

Betty, along with his Army buddies, this journey has brought peace and healing. It’s been 45 years since his death and this bond of “brothers” is still evident in their final quest to honor their fallen brothers’ memory.



Larry’s wife Hazel Makahilahila Oliveira

The family, along with Uncle Tommy and Uncle Mel,

had planned to witness the inscription in May 2020. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the ceremony was postponed. But, his daughters were allowed to attend and watch with tears of joys as their dad’s name was inscribed.

Photos provided by Julia Oliveira Payton

The Vietnam Wall is often referred to as “The Wall



Uncle Tommy and Momi, Julie, Judy, & Lisa



Uncle Mel Ozeki with Teili and Lisa