

V HAWAII VETERAN

Lawelawe i nā koa kahiko me ka ha'aheo: "Serving veterans with pride"

Vol. 1 No. 3

State of Hawaii Office of Veterans Services

Winter 1992

vet news

Disabled vets compensation increased

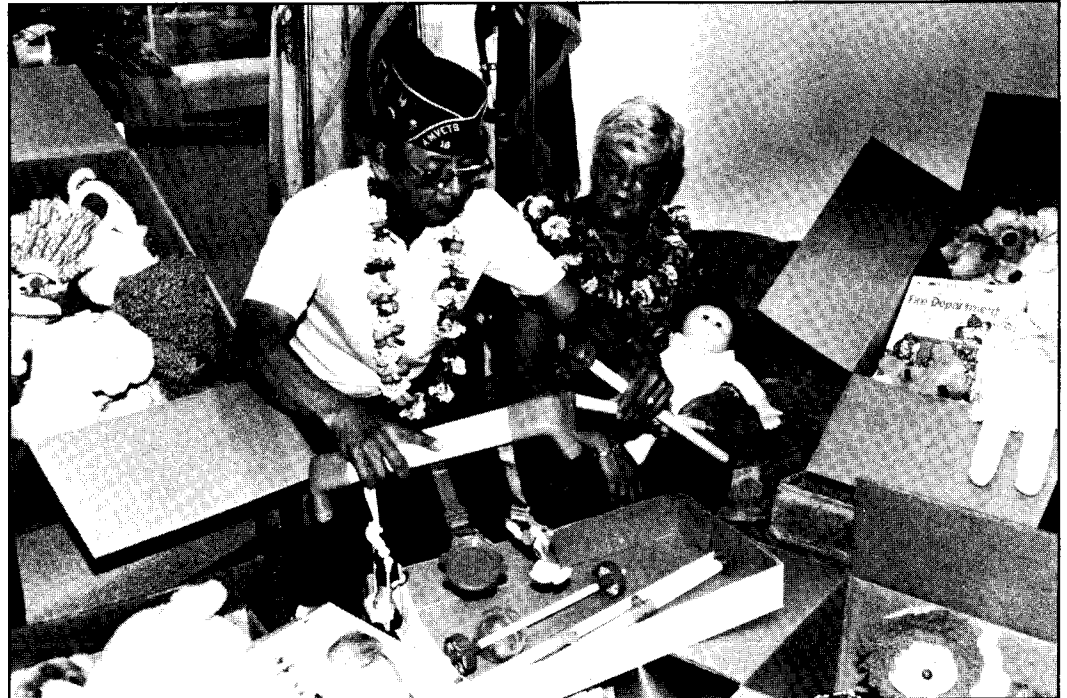
Compensation payments for disabled veterans were increased by three percent, effective Dec. 1. The increase also applies to survivors of service-members or veterans who died from service-connected causes.

Veterans whose service-connected disabilities are rated at 30 percent or more may receive additional allowances for dependents, based on the number of dependents and the extent of disability.

VA insurance, education and survivors' benefits reforms

The Veterans Benefits Act of 1992 eliminates the current Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) schedule of benefits based on military rank. A monthly base rate of \$750 took effect Jan. 1. That rate is increased by \$165 per month for veterans totally disabled due to service for at least eight years prior to death. Surviving spouses of veterans who died before Jan. 1 will receive the higher of either the new rate or the benefit under the old schedule.

The Act also increases the maximum amount of insurance coverage available
(continued on page 6)



Nancy S. Williams

Sandy and Ann Kodama display some of the 300 pounds of toys collected for Kauai's children by members of AMVETS, Post 16, New Jersey.

New Jersey veterans donate toys for Kauai's children

By Nancy S. Williams

More than 300 pounds of toys donated for young victims of Hurricane Iniki arrived on Kauai from Bridgeport, New Jersey Nov. 6, 1992. The toys were collected by members of the American Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam (AMVETS) Post 16, New Jersey, in a toy drive organized by member Sanford "Sandy" Kodama and his wife, Ann.

When hearing of Hurricane Iniki's effect on Kauai, Kodama, who was born and raised on Oahu, realized that the island would be in a particularly difficult situation because of the delay and expense involved in shipping supplies. He knew that the adults would receive help but wondered about the children.

The Kodamas initially planned to carry the toys as excess luggage on their yearly

trip to Hawaii. The response was so great, however, that this plan soon became unworkable, and they were faced with raising the money for shipping. After they were turned down by several air carriers, the American Legion came through with a \$250 donation covering nearly all of the cost. They also received donations from individuals.

Kodama expressed wonder at the generosity of the children who willingly gave up their toys for other boys and girls in need. In describing his experiences he said, "I've had my Christmas already."

In Kauai, the toys were turned over to the Veterans Wives Auxiliary for gift-wrapping and distribution during a Nov. 22 Thanksgiving Luau sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Office of Veterans Services

State of Hawaii Department of Defense



Help empower veterans in the new year

From the Director

Larry S. K. Lee

Veterans Affairs. The new director will be charged with the dubious task of persuading the president, the Congress and the fiscal planners of the critical need to adequately fund and sustain veterans programs. For too many years, veterans have been shamefully short-changed in funding for required services and benefits. Although an additional one billion dollars was made available in each of the preceding two years, these funds were utilized to make up prior shortages. No additional services were provided.

As veterans who are deeply concerned about our country and the plight of present, past and future veterans, it is incumbent on each of us to be aware of the issues that affect our entitlements, our national security, and our economy. We are responsible for the policymakers who have been elected to represent us, and we should ensure that they carry out their responsibilities to the benefit of all Americans.

Periodically, you will be called upon, either as a member of a veterans service organization or as an individual to assist us in pursuing initiatives that we feel will benefit our veterans. I ask your kokua in supporting our efforts to ensure that our sacrifices to guarantee a free and independent nation were not in vain and that our children and grandchildren will also benefit from our sacrifices. Let 1993 be the year of change, involvement and the empowerment of Veterans.

1992 is history. The echos of "Peace On Earth, Good Will Toward Men" have faded. Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki have wreaked their fury in Florida, Louisiana and Hawaii. The Cold War has ended. Our military forces continue to be drawn down, but we are still providing humanitarian assistance in foreign countries.

1993 will also be history. We have elected a new commander-in-chief, many new members of Congress, and many new members of our own Hawaii State Legislature. We have elected Americans whom we trust and who we feel will best represent the citizens of the United States of America and its more than 27 million veterans.

We will also experience new leadership at the federal level in the Department of

Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery -- Update

Burials

482 as of Dec. 10.

Phase IA

Completed.

cost: \$1.8 million.

Phase IB

Increments 1 and 2 completed.

cost: \$9.4 million.

Phase II & III

Designs completed. Construction began, April 1992. Completion scheduled, August 1993.

cost: \$5.4 million.

Phase IV

Design in progress. Design completion scheduled, early 1993. Construction to begin, mid-1993. Completion scheduled, summer 1994.

cost: \$5.4 million.

Total Project Cost

\$22.0 million (50/50 state-federal share).

Vietnam vets family assistance available

The Vietnam Veterans Family Assistance Program, sponsored by the Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii, assists Vietnam veterans and their families whose children need special education or are having trouble in school.

The program provides workshops, parent support groups, individual assistance, information and referrals.

To be eligible, a veteran must have served in the United States Armed Services in or near Vietnam between 1961 and 1972 and have a child with a disability.

All inquiries are confidential. For more information, contact the Vietnam Veterans Family Assistance Program, (Oahu) 536-9684. Neighbor island callers may call collect.

Pearl Harbor attack remembered

At 7:56 a.m., Dec. 7, four F-15 fighters from the Hawaii National Guard's 199th Fighter Squadron swept over the final resting place of the USS Arizona, which sank Dec. 7, 1941, during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The 'missing man' flyover ended a moment of silence observed throughout the Pearl Harbor Naval complex to mark the exact moment of the Japanese attack. The observance was part of ceremonies held at the USS Arizona Visitor Center and on the USS Arizona Memorial to commemorate the 51st anniversary of the attack.

The Arizona memorial ceremony, which was attended by Gov. John Waihee, Pearl Harbor survivors, veterans representatives and other invited guests, included an address by Admiral Robert J. Kelly, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, wreath presentations by the military and veterans organizations, a 21-gun salute, and echo taps. The ceremony was sponsored by the U.S. Navy.

In a concurrent ceremony held at the Visitor Center by the National Park Service (NPS), the invocation and address were given by Pearl Harbor survivors, Chaplain Joseph Morgan and Samuel Bishop, respectively.

Jack Smythe (left) and Alfred Los Banos, of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, salute the soldiers and sailors lost in the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor during ceremonies on the USS Arizona Memorial, Dec. 7.



Wes Young

Filipino vets service coordinator joins OVS

Story and photo by Gaye S. Sakamoto

The Office of Veterans Services (OVS) welcomes new Filipino veterans service coordinator, Mila Medallon. Medallon began at OVS in October. As a veterans service coordinator, she assists Filipino veterans applying for naturalization, specializing in unique and difficult cases referred to her by four immigration centers.

The job also includes assisting Filipino veterans with Department of Human Services forms. At a temporary shelter for Filipino vets, she helps provide food, clothing, housing and jobs. She is working on a report for the state legislature and developing brochures to inform veterans of available programs.

"I was always a social worker," recalls Medallon. "When I was a child, I used to steal meat from my mother's pantry. I hid the meat in packages, then rode to the poor area of town on my bike and distributed the meat to the people. I was nicknamed *Karne* which means 'meat' in Filipino.

Mom never found out until years later when she came to America."

Medallon received a B.A. from the University of the Philippines in 1966 and came to Hawaii two years later. In 1977, she received another B.A., in psychology, from West Oahu College, and in 1979, a Masters of Social Work from the University of Hawaii.

She worked as a social worker at the Catholic Social Services from 1984 to 1985 and at Straub Hospital from 1985 to 1987. She then worked for five years at the State Department of Labor, Office of Community Service, as the immigrant service director, where she was the 1992 Department of Labor and Industrial Relations employee of the year.

Medallon and her husband, Nune, have one son, Ron. In her spare time she writes poetry and composes songs. She is also the editor for the *Fil-Am* newspaper.

In the future, Medallon wants to pursue a Ph.D. in social work. "I want to be



Filipino veterans service coordinator, Mila Medallon

productive and not take up space. When I come home at night, I get a warm and fuzzy feeling after helping improve people's lives."

World War II

50 years later 'one puka puka' vets look back

In June 1992, the famed 100th Battalion commemorated its 50th anniversary. Comprised entirely of Japanese Americans (AJAs) separated from other units because of their race, the battalion earned a reputation for dedicated and valiant service during World War II.

In 1942, AJAs from the 298th and 299th Infantry, Hawaii National Guard, many of them draftees, were shipped to Schofield Barracks where they learned they would become part of an all-Japanese unit.

Looking back 50 years, former Staff Sgt. Mike Tokunaga of Company C and 1st Sgt. Martin Tohara of Company B contemplate their experiences as part of the 100th Battalion or 'one puka puka.'

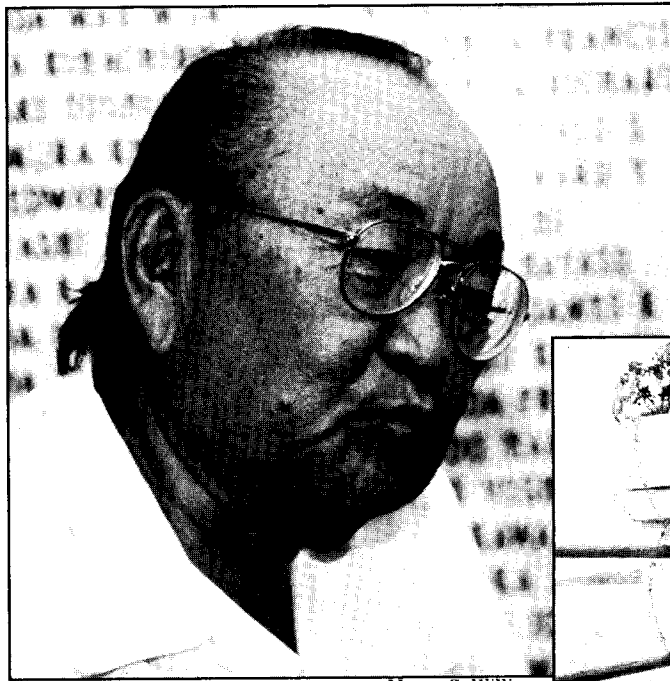
Tokunaga: In June 1942 all of the AJA boys were asked to report to be shipped to Schofield Barracks. We didn't know why. I felt a little apprehensive because these were all Japanese boys, and I wondered what they were going to do.

On Dec. 7, we went down to the warehouse area to load sandbags and barbed wire. When we got through working, they took us down to the stockade.

"... as we saw our friends die, I guess we became accustomed to it. We became hardened criminals ..."

I felt the Army brass did not trust us because we were Japanese.

One night two weeks after the war broke out, someone came to our tent, and took away our rifles and ammunition. I wondered why. The following morning the colonel told us there was a rumor that the Japanese people in Honolulu were going to riot.



Nancy S. Williams

(Right) Mike Tokunaga as a young soldier on the banks of the Mississippi River.

The 100th was sent to train at Camp McCoy, Wisc. and then to Camp Shelby, Miss.

Tohara: We stayed at Camp McCoy for six months. Most of our boys didn't have any experience with snow. It was something new for us. In January of '43 we were shipped to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where it was hot and humid.

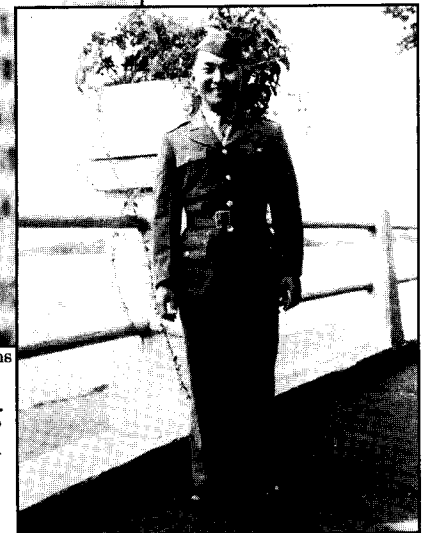
Tokunaga: When we got to Mississippi, we were considered white. I remember going to a movie with a friend. We went to a ticket booth served by a black lady and she said, 'You white people buy your tickets at the other booth.'

Tohara: When we got on the bus we were supposed to ride in the front, not in the back. We in Hawaii like to ride in the back of the bus -- it's fun!

The 100th was sent to North Africa for less than a month and then went on to Salerno, Italy, in Sept. 1943. The unit fought up the Salerno Valley and through the first siege of Cassino.

Tohara: Being foot soldiers, we had to walk. Sept. 30 was our first day of combat in Salerno. After marching for 32 hours, we realized we had pushed the enemy back 29 miles. That's a record for the whole U.S. army today.

(Left) Mike Tokunaga, formerly of Company C, 100th Battalion, describes World War II experiences.



Let me tell you about the language we used. While we were on the front lines we decided we were going to fool the Germans, who understood English. So we said 'eh, mauka ... makai ... you pau already.' And they couldn't catch us!

Tokunaga: In Alife, when we were about 30 yards from a line of trees, a German jumped up and said 'comrade!' When he jumped up, the guy behind me shot him. Then a machine gun opened up 30 yards to the left. We jumped in a ditch and started firing back. I noticed that the two Germans operating the machine gun started running away. So, like a crazy guy, I ran for the machine gun, turned it around and tried to fire. The reason why they ran away was because the machine gun was jammed!

Then another German, about 25 yards from where I was, fired at me. He blew a hole right through the top of my helmet, and another bullet grazed my cheek.

A tank came riding through the gully and stopped. We called Masao Awakuni to come up. He put his bazooka through the hole in the tank and I loaded it for him. Then he put his bazooka down. Very quietly he took off his glasses. They were all fogged up because he had

crawled 50 yards! He cleaned his glasses and very calmly picked up his bazooka and shot the tank. We could hear the two Germans in the tank screaming.

To see an enemy soldier dead is not as emotional as seeing one of our friends dead. The first friend who got shot and died shook me up. For about three days I was all shook up. Later, as we saw our friends die, I guess we became accustomed to it. We became hardened criminals because our emotion was controlled.

Let me explain how fierce the fighting can be. When we attacked Cassino we had 126 men from 203 in Salerno. In

"...We knew we were fighting for our country and yet, we weren't angry at anyone ..."

four days, 23 of us walked back. The rest were killed or wounded.

Tohara: We were in a place called Benevento. There was a nun with about five or six little girls. They were so scared ... and hanging onto this nun!

Finally we convinced them that we were Americans. We collected as many biscuits as we could from the boys and gave them to the nun. She was so happy she didn't know how to thank us. To see the children suffer like that ... they just couldn't control themselves. This sight, until today, is in my mind about how the children suffered.

After a month's rest, the 100th landed at Anzio Beach, skirted Rome and met the 442nd at Civitavecchia, Italy.

Tokunaga: The 100th was the advance unit marching into Rome. We were about a mile outside of Rome when we suddenly got orders to stop. The Germans had decided to abandon Rome because they didn't want it to be ruined. All the American troops had to do was march in. They sent another outfit, all white boys, right through us into Rome.

In Oct. 1944, the 100th Battalion participated in the heroic rescue of the "Lost Battalion," a Texas unit isolated for seven days behind enemy lines in France. The 100th was dubbed "The Purple Heart Battalion" for the heavy losses it sustained during the rescue.

Tokunaga: We got a strange order saying that we were going to southern

France. We recaptured Bruyeres from the Germans. I lost my lieutenant in that battle. After we took Bruyeres, we went for Biffontaine. Evidently it was a regional headquarters for the German army. We took every house except the last two. The Germans counterattacked for two nights. That was the battle of France except for the Lost Battalion.

At 2 a.m. they said we had to go up front again. They told us that one battalion of the 36th division was surrounded by the Germans and we had to go and rescue them. That was a fierce battle for about four days! The Germans had tanks between us and the lost battalion. We rescued about 126 men. But I swear we must have lost -- killed and wounded -- three times that number. But for every life that you save, even if you have to sacrifice two for one, it is worth it. For the men that we lost in the rescue of the "Lost Battalion," it was worth it.

Tokunaga and Tohara reflect on their battlefield emotions.

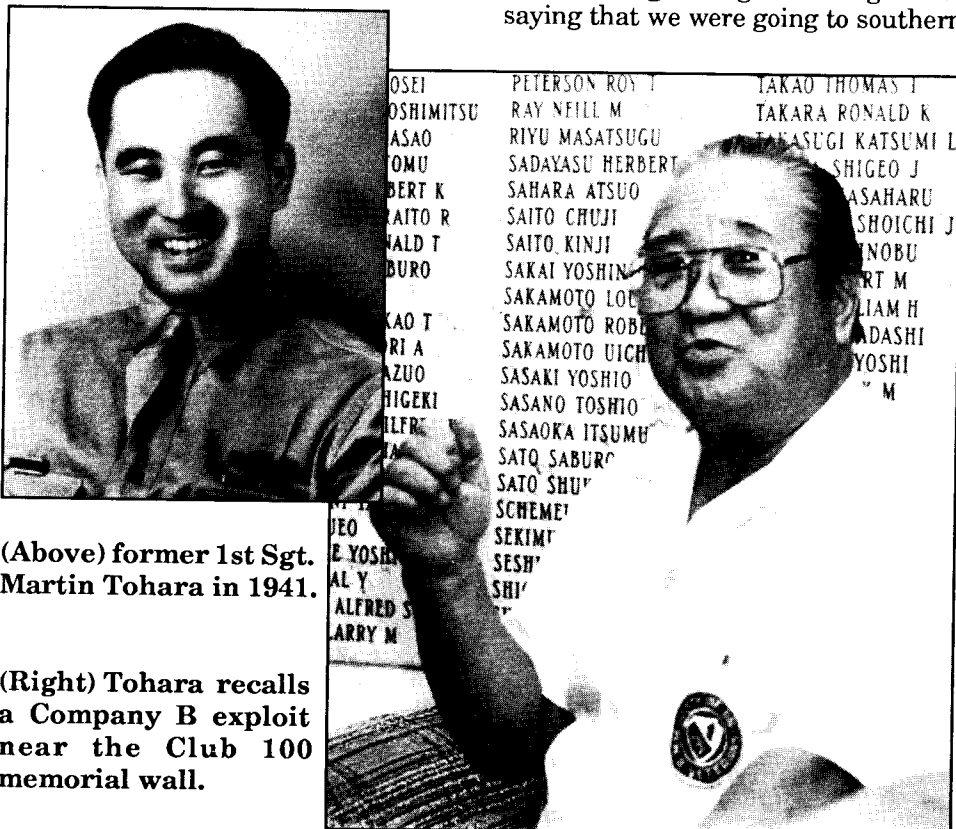
Tokunaga: The fear is indescribable. Fear of dying is so constant on the front line that some people emotionally break down. This is why I think we have a lot of cases of shell shock. Because we are not prepared for this kind of fear.

Because of what happened at Schofield, we built up an attitude that we had to show the brass that we could fight. But in the heat of the battle, it's not a patriotic sense that makes you fight. It's a sense of wanting to live because it's you or the other guy. Growing up, I'm sure all of us AJA boys were told, don't shame the name of the family. This stuck in my mind. To abandon friends was a disgrace. I think this feeling worked quite a bit on the men of the 100th.

Tohara: We knew we were fighting for our country and yet we weren't angry at anyone. It's either him or you.

Talking about being afraid, when you get hit, you feel, 'Gee, I'm dead, but where am I hurt?' No matter who you are, when you are on the front line you will think of some way of praying. There is nobody that can say he is not afraid.

The Battalion's efforts in Italy and France earned it two Presidential Unit Citations and a personal welcome home (as part of the 442nd Combat Team) by President Harry S. Truman in 1946.



Nancy S. Williams

(Above) former 1st Sgt. Martin Tohara in 1941.

(Right) Tohara recalls a Company B exploit near the Club 100 memorial wall.

Q&A:

Department of Veterans Affairs

I was in the reserves for six years. I recently heard that reservists are eligible for VA-guaranteed home loans. Is this true?

Under a six-year pilot program established by Congress in October, 1992, VA home loans will be available to members of the National Guard and Reserves who have served at least six years. The VA loan program was previously only available for active duty veterans.

The legislation allows personnel to obtain mortgage loans for as much as \$144,000. An additional guaranty entitlement may be secured for a small fee, raising the total loan to as much as \$184,000.

Eligible Guard and Reserve members will pay a higher origination fee than active duty veterans. The program requires a fee of two percent without a down payment, 1.5 percent with a down payment of at least five percent and 1.25 percent with a down payment of 10 percent or more.

Reservists will pay the same funding fee as other veterans for interest-rate-reduction refinancing loans and assumptions (.5 percent).

You may apply for a certificate of eligibility for this program using VA Form 26-1880, "Request for Determination of Eligibility and Available Loan Guaranty Entitlement." Contact your nearest VA Regional Office for information.

For more information, contact any DVA office. In Honolulu, call 541-1000 or 1(800)827-1000 or write: VA Medical and Regional Office, P.O. Box 50188, Honolulu, HI 96850.

National Memorials**Korea and women vets honored****Korean War Memorial**

Ground-breaking took place last summer in Washington, D.C. for the Korean War Veterans Memorial, scheduled for completion July 27, 1995. The \$16-million structure will stand among trees across the Reflecting Pool from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It will consist of 16 infantrymen struggling up a hill toward the American flag and a polished granite wall etched with other images of the Korean War.

Vietnam Women's Memorial

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project (VWMP) is accepting contributions for a sculpture honoring women who served in Vietnam. The bronze statue will be located on the grounds of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington and will consist of three servicewomen: one holding a wounded soldier; one

searching for incoming helicopters; and one clutching an empty helmet. The VWMP must raise \$2-million before the memorial's scheduled completion on Veterans Day, 1993. Contributions may be sent to the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, Inc., Suite 302, 2001 S St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20009.

Women in Military Service

A memorial recognizing women who serve or have served in the armed forces has also been authorized by Congress. It will be built near the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery and will house a multi-media auditorium and a computerized data bank with records on all registered service women. The Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation is raising funds for the \$14-million project. To contribute call 1(800) 472-5883.

vet news -- continued

under the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs to \$200,000. VGLI will be offered on a renewable five-year basis.

Effective April 1, monthly basic educational assistance rates under the Montgomery GI Bill will increase to \$400 for full-time participants who serve three years or more on active duty; \$325 for those who serve two years of active duty; and \$190 for full-time participants in the Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve program.

Counseling for women vets

The Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 authorizes the Department of Veterans Services (DVA) to provide counseling services to women veterans who have suffered trauma from sexual assault or harassment during military service. Counseling must be sought within two years of discharge. Those discharged more than two years ago are eligible for counseling until Dec. 31, 1993.

The legislation also authorizes DVA to establish a Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Registry to include medical information on Gulf veterans.

VA loan guaranty program changes

The Veterans Home Loan Program Amendments of 1992 allow veterans to negotiate interest rates on VA-guaranteed home loans. DVA will track the negotiated loans and compare their rates and points to those charged on FHA and conventional loans. The test program expires Dec. 31, 1995.

The legislation also authorizes a three-year program for VA-guaranteed adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs). These mortgages will be similar to FHA ARMs, with the interest rate corresponding to a specified national interest rate index. Annual rate adjustments are limited to one percent, and total adjustments are limited to a five-percent increase for the life of the loan. The ARMs may be used to refinance existing loans.

Veterans Day '92 commemorated



Spec. Jan T. Tanimoto
Brig. Gen. Myles M. Nakatsu addresses a Veterans Day gathering at the Hawaii County Veterans Cemetery in Hilo.

Ceremonies held for the first time at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe, Oahu

By Nancy S. Williams

Veterans Day ceremonies were held for the first time at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery (HSVC) in Kaneohe, Oahu, Nov. 11. During the ceremony, the names of Hawaii's servicemembers who were killed or missing in action were read to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The HSVC ceremony also included posting of the flags of Hawaii's veterans organizations, and a keynote address by Lt. Gen. Allen K. Ono (U.S. Army retired).

Earlier in the day, F-15 fighters of the Hawaii Air National Guard's 199th Fighter Squadron flew in a "missing man" formation over the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl), where hundreds had gathered for the annual massing of the colors ceremony.

The Big Island Veterans Association sponsored ceremonies at the Hawaii County Veterans Cemetery and a lunch at the University of Hawaii - Hilo. The ceremonies included posting of the colors and a "salute to the dead" by the Color Guard and Honor Guard of the 2nd Battalion, 299th Infantry, Hawaii Army National Guard. The gathering was addressed by Hawaii County Mayor Lorraine R. Inouye and Brig. Gen. Myles M. Nakatsu, deputy adjutant general, State of Hawaii Department of Defense. Gen. Nakatsu also spoke at the luncheon.

The Maui Veterans of Foreign Wars held their awards banquet during the evening of Nov. 11.

In the wake of Hurricane Iniki, ceremonies on Kauai were limited to a sunrise service, Nov. 8, and a belated Veterans Day parade, Nov. 28.



John Utley (far right) and Carswell Ross (second from right) of the Office of Veterans Services join Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion members in a salute during Veterans Day ceremonies at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe, Oahu.

Nancy S. Williams

calendar/notices

February 15, Monday

President's Day -- state and federal holiday.

March 26, Friday

Prince Kuhio Day -- state holiday only.

April 9, Friday

Good Friday -- state holiday only.

April 16, Friday

Military Retiree Golf Tournament -- for retired military personnel with established handicaps; Kaneohe Marine Corps Golf Course; check-in, 11:30 a.m.; tee-off, 12:30 p.m. For more information call 449-9896.

May 15, Saturday

29th Infantry Brigade 25th anniversary celebration of the 1968 call-up -- Wailoa State Park, Hilo; golfing, cocktails, dinner (\$15); hotel and room arrangements available. R.S.V.P by Jan. 31 to: Lt. Col. Henry S. Hara (retired), 17-C Olona Street, Hilo, HI 96720.

If you want to list an event for veterans or veterans organizations in the Hawaii Veteran, please forward the information to the State Department of Defense Public Affairs Office, 734-8527 (fax), or call 732-1711. **The revised submission deadline for the Spring (March 15) issue is Feb. 25.**

Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association (CGCVA)

The CGCVA is an organization of past and present U.S. Coast Guard/Reserve members who served in or provided support to combat situations. Its purpose is to preserve the memory of fallen comrades, assist Coast Guard veterans and dependents, and enhance the image of the Coast Guard. Membership is \$10 per year. A reunion is held biannually. To join, write to: Baker Herbert, CWO (ret.), Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association, 6858 Lafayette Rd., Medina, OH 44256, or call (216) 725-6527.

Notice to Coral Sea Veterans

A Coral Sea Veterans group in Australia has made a limited number of commemorative belt buckles available for veterans of the World War II battle of the Coral Sea. If you are a Coral Sea veteran or know someone who is, please contact Marie Manning at the Department of Veterans Affairs, 541-1000.

Obituary: Lawrence Isamo Ebesugawa, 62, a former member of the Commission on Memorials for Veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts, died Dec. 12. Ebesugawa retired from the U.S. Army as a lieutenant colonel after 20 years of service, including two tours in Vietnam. He also worked in the Lieutenant Governor's Office, Elections Division, for 13 years. He is survived by his wife, C. D.; sons, Ford and Rian; daughter, Gale Tomino; and six grandchildren.



HAWAII VETERAN

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