

MISSION

Preserve, perpetuate and share the legacy of the Nisei Soldiers to promote good citizenship.

VISION

A community in which we live by the universal values of honor, gratitude and patriotism upheld by America's Nisei Soldiers.

LEADERSHIP

Officers:

Lynn Heirakuji
PRESIDENT

Byrnes Yamashita
VICE PRESIDENT

Kristin Alm Kamakahi
TREASURER

Phyllis Hironaka
SECRETARY

Directors:

Larry Enomoto
Lynn Heirakuji
Phyllis Hironaka
Kristin Alm Kamakahi
Jennifer Okubo Polido
Caitlin Shishido*
Warren Yamamoto
Byrnes Yamashita
Bill Wright

* Interim

Advisors:

Wesley Deguchi
Warren Haruki
James Hirai
Jace Mikulanec
Gary Okuda
Barbara Tanabe
Suzanne Vares-Lum

nvlchawaii.org
[@nvlchawaii](mailto:nvlchawaii)



Nisei Impact Youth Journalism Program

The NVL partnered with the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* in launching the Nisei Impact Youth Journalism Program that ran from December 2021 through March 2022. Five students from four public and private Oahu high schools volunteered to participate in the program which taught them journalism skills using the Nisei Soldier experience as the story line. Jayna Omaye, then the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser's* Ethnic and Cultural Affairs reporter, held weekly sessions with the students teaching them journalism basics such as reporting, ethics, writing, interviewing, and photojournalism. Lynn Heirakuji, NVL President, gave a presentation to the students on the Nisei Soldier story and assisted in connecting students with Nisei Veterans who agreed to being interviewed about their military and civilian lives.

The students and the Nisei Veterans they chose to write about were:

- Marisa Fujimoto, Kalani High School – Kenneth Fujimoto, 442nd RCT, her grandfather
- Shane Kaneshiro, McKinley High School – Jack Nakamura, 100th Infantry Battalion
- L. Kensington Ono, Punahou School – Gerome Hirata, 100th Infantry Battalion, her great granduncle
- Daria Stapolsky, Moanalua High School – Edward Ikuma, 100th Infantry Battalion
- Stephanie Yeung, Kalani High School – Kenji Ego, 442nd RCT

The students were tasked with researching and interviewing Nisei soldiers and family members and then creating publishable essays on the soldiers' individual stories. The *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* staff provided close guidance to each student and professional editing support for the completion of the essays.

On April 5, 2022, the NVL hosted a celebration ceremony at the Maunalani Nursing and Rehabilitation Center on Oahu, to showcase the journalistic accomplishments of the students. During the event, the students read excerpts from their essays – in some cases, as the Veterans they interviewed sat beside them. In attendance were *Honolulu Star-*



ABOVE - left to right: Shane Kaneshiro, Daria Stapolsky, Marisa Fujimoto, L. Kensington Ono, and Stephanie Yeung

LEFT - top row, left to right: Jayna Omaye (former Honolulu Star-Advertiser Reporter), L. Kensington Ono, Marsha McFadden (Managing Editor, Honolulu Star-Advertiser), Daria Stapolsky, Stephanie Yeung, and Lynn Heirakuji (NVL President); front, left to right: Edward Ikuma (100th Infantry Battalion) and Kenji Ego (442nd RCT). Photo courtesy of Cindy Ellen Russell/Honolulu Star-Advertiser.

Advertiser staff, parents of the students, and two of the Nisei Veterans who had been interviewed. See Pages 2. and 3. for excerpts and links to complete essays.

Jayna said, "It's been so inspiring to see the next generation continue to tell the life stories of our Nisei veterans. All of the stories weave a common theme: the legacy of our Nisei soldiers extends far beyond the battlefield. As a descendant of a Nisei veteran, I have always known that, and my grandpa's legacy is his love for our family. He was a gentle, kind, patient and generous man who I miss every day. I feel so humbled and blessed that I could help play a role in continuing to honor his memory and the legacy of the brave men who served with him."

Congratulations to the students for their exceptional accomplishments. The NVL hopes to continue this partnership with the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* as a way to promote the Nisei Soldier story among the youth of Hawai'i.

BELOW - Hawai'i's students have long played a role in the telling of stories. In the 1800s, scholars at Maui's Lahainaluna Seminary (now Lahainaluna School) contributed to the composition of "Moololelo Hawaii," a record of Hawai'i's history and traditions. Others operated machinery likely used in the printing of Ka Lama Hawaii, the first newspaper west of the Rocky Mountains.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It was heartwarming and inspiring to witness the interest that five local high school students displayed in learning about journalism and the Nisei Soldier story. These impressive young almost adults – four from public schools and one from a private school – put their hearts and energies into getting to know the personal histories of the Nisei Soldiers they had selected to study. Each student wrote an essay and gathered photographs about the Nisei Soldier they had come to know. For three of the students this involved interviewing an actual Nisei Veteran and learning about the Veterans' battlefield experiences and post-war lives. For the other two students this called for them to interview members of their own families to learn newly revealed stories about their late grandfather and great granduncle.

I grew up knowing that my father, Walter, had served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and was a disabled veteran, having been seriously injured on the battlefields of Italy in 1944. He was proud of his service but was never prideful - that seemed to be a recurring theme among the Nisei Veterans. My father never talked much about his service until late in his life and I was admittedly and embarrassingly ignorant and nonchalant about Hawai'i's Nisei Soldier story. It wasn't until I worked for the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C. and became humbly educated by Army officers and soldiers about the legendary military exploits of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd RCT, and Military Intelligence Service Soldiers, that I – late in my life – developed an understanding and deep sense of gratitude for what they did. True confessions.



Walter Heirakuji (left) with friends, circa 1945



Nisei Veteran Kenji Ego with Kaiser High School students, 2020

And that is why I'm so taken that these five young students chose to spend their time – given all the other options they have – to get up close to the Nisei Soldier story. I truly commend them for their efforts because the lessons given to us by Hawai'i's Nisei Soldiers will only live on if embraced by the youth of our community. Please join with the NVL as we continue to share these powerful lessons about values, working with others to drive change, and standing up for civil liberties.

Mahalo,
Lynn Heirakuji
President, Nisei Veterans Legacy

PRESENTATIONS

JET ALUMNI

NVL President Heirakuji participated in an online forum on the Nisei Soldiers Legacy sponsored by the Japan Exchange and Training (JET) Alumni Association of Florida and the Sasakawa Foundation on January 25, 2022. Lynn was the keynote speaker and provided remarks on the Nisei Soldier legacy and its significance to present-day social justice movements particularly in relation to the rise in Anti-Asian sentiment.



JET Alumni Association

CHERRY BLOSSOM COURT

Lynn also made a presentation to the 69th Cherry Blossom Festival Court as part of its cultural awareness program on February 26, 2022. NVL Director Kristin Alm Kamakahi, a former contestant herself, serves as an advisor to the Cherry Blossom Court contestants and arranged for the online presentation.

Nisei Impact Youth Journalism Program

Below are excerpts from stories by authors Stephanie Yeung and L. Kensington Ono. To read the complete stories visit <<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2022/04/10/hawaii-news/nisei-impact-honolulu-star-advertiser-youth-storytelling-project-honors-hawaiis-japanese-american-world-war-ii-veterans/>>.

Kenji Ego, 442nd RCT

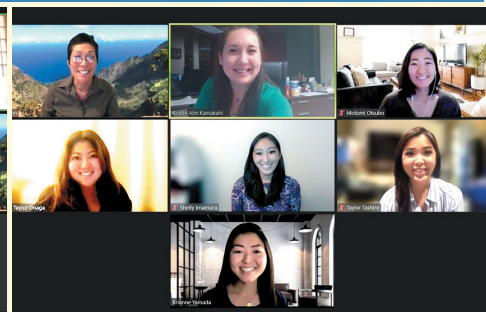
by Stephanie Yeung, Kalani High School

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the people who Kenji Ego thought were his friends turned their backs on him. Knowing what was being said about Japanese Americans being named "enemy aliens," Kenji still wanted to pledge his loyalty by signing up to become a soldier. ☀ "My country is and was the United States," Ego said. "When volunteering for the 442nd, there was no why or how. There was only 'I must join'. I had to join because I was never a disloyal American." ☀ After the war, Kenji decided on pre-med at the University of Hawai'i. But going on a voyage to the southeast Pacific to study tuna, Kenji had found his passion and decided to become a marine biologist. ☀ At 97 years old, Kenji's legacy during the war was something to be commended. Giving up was not an option even after his injury in the battle of the Lost Battalion ...

Gerome Hirata, 100th Infantry Battalion

by L. Kensington Ono (her great granduncle), Punahou School

A bona-fide all-American boy, Gerome Hirata was a 1938 graduate of McKinley High School. Although his brothers had been sent to Japan for a formal education, Hirata thought of himself as a true American and refused to go. Instead, he stayed in Hawai'i, participating in typical "American" pastimes such as football. ☀ Although there were risks to enlisting, Hirata's family felt pride in the bravery of their golden boy and didn't do anything to prevent him from joining up. According to Harris Hirata, the veteran's nephew, "His parents' feelings were mixed between pride and fear. I don't think anyone, including the old folks, objected ..."



69th Cherry Blossom Festival Court

FOCUSING OUR MESSAGE ON THE YOUTH

As described in previous issues, the NVL has been transitioning from a historic preservation focus to become more of a thought leader and agent for change. We are expanding our perspective to include broader current day issues to demonstrate the relevance of the Nisei Soldiers' contributions to the younger generations of today. We are currently engaged in several fronts to help expose the young people of Hawai'i to the Nisei Soldier story to ensure that their legacy is perpetuated.

■ Nisei Impact Youth Journalism Program:

See article on page 1.

■ **Educational Initiative:** The NVL is working to support the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (JCCH) roll out of an educational curriculum on the Nisei Soldiers to the Hawai'i Public High Schools. We provided some funds for stipends to teachers willing to take the training, incorporate the curriculum in their classes and provide feedback.

■ **NVL Scholarships:** The NVL presented \$500 scholarship awards to two Punahou JROTC cadets for their outstanding leadership and community service accomplishments. Bob Takao, Senior Army Instructor, LTC, USA (Ret.), Punahou School coordinated the Punahou



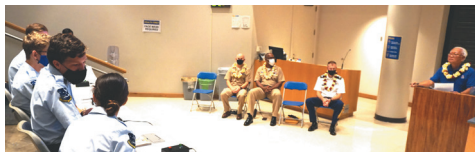
(Left to right) LTC Takao, JROTC Cadets, President Heirakuji (IHI Photography)

JROTC Battalion Awards Ceremony on May 2, 2022 which included a change of command ceremony, remarks by Dr. Emily McCarren (Punahou Academy Principal), and the

presentation of several awards to deserving cadets. President Heirakuji presented Cadet Corporal Emiko Uohara and Cadet First Sergeant Iris Sim with the NVL awards.

■ **Website Update:** We are embarking on a re-design of our website to reflect our expanded focus on the role of the Nisei Soldiers in striving for social justice and racial equity. Having proven their loyalty to America beyond all doubt on the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific Theater, they returned to Hawai'i and sought to break through the "Glass Ceiling" that existed reflecting the stratified social and economic environment that existed prior to World War II. The website will be re-structured to make navigation easier and feature videos and articles with an opportunity for feedback from visitors.

■ **Hawai'i JROTC Academic Challenge:** On April 2, 2022, Hawai'i JROTC cadets from Kaiser High School and Punahou School competed in a quiz game format pitting cadets from



NVL rep Byrnes Yamashita (right) posing questions. (Courtesy Punahou School)

Air Force JROTC and Army JROTC units respectively. NVL supported the event which resulted in Punahou earning the honor to represent Hawai'i in the national competition in Washington, D.C. this summer.

■ 522 Field Artillery Battalion Animation:

This is a 40+ minute animated story about the Nisei soldiers serving in the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion (FAB) that was the artillery arm of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and participated in the liberation of some mini-camps of the Dachau Concentration Camp near Munich, Germany at the end of World War II. We will be developing an educational curriculum to help introduce it to middle and high school teachers.

THE HAWAII HERALD

In the 2021 Veterans Day issue of *The Hawai'i Herald*, President Heirakuji wrote a moving article about her father Walter Heirakuji's service in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and how her experience as an executive in the Department of the Army exposed her to the widespread impact of the Nisei Soldiers. She described how the Army's education of its officer corps about the Nisei Soldiers motivated her to seek a role in continuing the effort after retiring and returning to Hawai'i. She has been making presentations to different groups including University of Hawai'i classes to further this purpose. Read the newspaper article here: <<https://www.thehawaiiherald.com/2021/11/05/nisei-soldiers-nisei-soldiers-rekindling-the-soul-of-fire/>>

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

New directors have recently joined the NVL board: Ms. Jennifer Okubo Polido, Ms. Kristin Alm Kamakahi and Dr. Caitlin Shishido. All are Yonsei whose grandfathers served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. They are bringing fresh energy and ideas to the NVL board.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE JA CL

On February 19, 2022, the NVL co-sponsored an online event with the Honolulu Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 that led the US Army to incarcerate over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese American citizens from the West Coast during World War II.

Nisei Impact Youth Journalism Program

Below are excerpts from stories by authors Marisa Fujimoto, Daria Stapolsky, and Shane Kaneshiro. To read the complete stories visit <<https://www.staradvertiser.com/2022/04/10/hawaii-news/nisei-impact-honolulu-star-advertiser-youth-storytelling-project-honors-hawaiis-japanese-american-world-war-ii-veterans/>>.

Kenneth Fujimoto, 442nd RCT

by Marisa Fujimoto (her grandfather), Kalani High School

Kenneth Yukio Fujimoto fought alongside members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in World War II, but his love and dedication to his family may be his greatest legacy. 🌸 "People like Spark Matsunaga and Daniel Inouye used to come over sometimes just to hang out," said son, Earl Fujimoto. "They were all great men, and my family and I could all tell how much it meant to my dad that he had people to share his experiences from the war with." 🌸 Fujimoto's sister-in-law, Marjorie Yonezaki, said, "They didn't talk about all that they had accomplished, but they didn't have to because we all knew that it was a proud moment for them to have had such an impact on all of our futures ..."

Edward Ikuma, 100th Infantry Battalion

by Daria Stapolsky, Moanalua High School

Edward Ikuma is known to be a loving father and a hero. He valued his bonds with family, friends, heritage, and service. What he had endured in the past shaped him to be the strength of the family. 🌸 Regardless of age, he took up sports such as golf until he was 90 years old. It could be said that his will to live and constantly finding ways to be active was the key to his living as long as he has now, said his daughter Joan Naguwa. 🌸 His time in the war was a big part of who he was, and although he was a bit discreet about his service to his family, he made sure his legacy was known by often taking his family to Club 100. At 103, Ikuma was one of the veterans who helped to found Club 100 almost 70 years ago ...

Jack Nakamura, 100th Infantry Battalion

by Shane Kaneshiro, McKinley High School

On a typical day, Jack Seitoku Nakamura, a 100th Infantry Battalion nisei veteran, wakes up and has a good breakfast and sings harmonious tunes that radiate throughout Good Samaritan Society Pohai Nani cottage. Nakamura then chuckles and apologizes to the nurses who listen for his singing and know where to find him. "I am sorry. I can't hear too well. A bomb fell next to me." Nakamura said. 🌸 When Pearl Harbor was attacked, Nakamura said he was discriminated against by the Chinese, Korean, Portuguese and the Puerto Ricans. "Oh boy I had a bad time. They look at me and they call me 'Jap Jap Jap,'" Nakamura said ...

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORLD II MEMORIAL PLAQUE UNVEILING

On Friday, November 12, 2021, a new World War II Memorial Plaque was unveiled at the original World War II Memorial site at the corner of King and Punchbowl Streets in downtown Honolulu. The World War II Memorial lists the names of over 800 men and women with ties to Hawai'i who served in World War II and paid the ultimate sacrifice. It was initially dedicated on December 7, 1944 and was the site of many December 7th memorial ceremonies in post-war years. The Memorial Plaque was funded by the National Association of Letter Carriers veterans group and recognized the sacrifices of all men and women who fought across the



globe in Europe and the Pacific Theater in defense of freedom and liberty. Several members of the Nisei veterans' community were honored guests at the unveiling including NVL board members Heirakuji and Enomoto.

(From left) Larry Enomoto, Grace Fujii (President, Sons & Daughters, 442nd RCT), Lynn Heirakuji, Dr. Shinye Gima (NIS Veteran)

MIS VETERANS SHINNEN ENKAI HELD

The MIS Veterans Education Society of Hawai'i held its first Shinnen Enkai party in two years on Sunday, February 13, 2022, at the Natsunoya Teahouse. Outgoing President Dr. Shinye Gima served as the emcee, welcomed all the attendees, and introduced guest speakers Mr. Nate Gytoku, President and Executive Director of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i, and Ms. Hanako Wakatsuki-Chong, Superintendent of the Hono'uli'uli National Historic



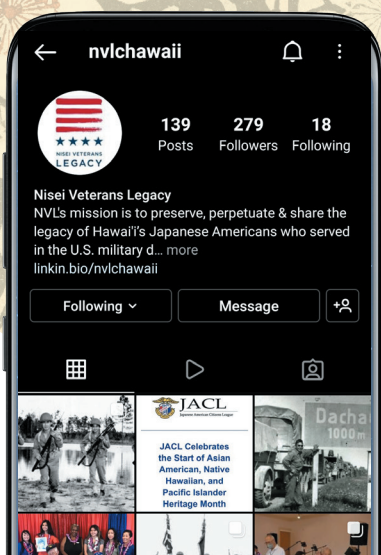
Nate Gytoku (right) swearing in new officers.

Site. Gytoku provided an overview of the current status of the JCCH activities and their plans to return to full public access soon. Wakatsuki-Chong updated everyone on the many ongoing efforts to prepare the site for public access, including a cultural landscape plan, road access, utility

Follow us on Instagram



If using the Instagram mobile app, go to @nvlchawaii or visit <<https://www.instagram.com/nvlchawaii/>>



infrastructure, and preliminary extended range development plans.

The program concluded with the swearing-in of the new slate of officers: President Larry Enomoto, Vice President Bev Ramsey, Secretary Karen Kikukawa, and Treasurer Sherman Takao. Directors include Gregg Hirata, Mark Matsunaga, Keith Matsumoto, Shinye Gima and Wilbert Toda.

NEW BOOK ON THE MIS

Bridge to the Sun: The Secret Role of the Japanese Americans Who Fought in the Pacific in World War II will be published by Knopf on Sept. 27. The narrative follows six Japanese American soldiers, among the first



Nisei in combat in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor – as their own families were being held in internment camps in America – deployed throughout the Pacific, to the jungles of New Georgia, the caves of Okinawa, and the mountains of Burma with the famed Merrill's Marauders, and who were, in effect, fighting two wars simultaneously: one, overseas against their ancestral homeland; the other, against racial prejudice at home.

FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR

Jeff Morita announced that Mr. Kimitomo Muromoto (Clyde Hill, Washington), I "Item" Company, 3rd Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team was inducted into the "Chevalier dans l'Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur" (Knight in the National Order of the French Legion of Honor). Award conferment was made in April. Congratulations to Messrs. Muromoto and Morita for a successful submission.

100TH INFANTRY BATTALION VETERANS COMMEMORATE THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY



This year marks the 80th anniversary of the creation of the 100th Infantry Battalion and several special events are being planned including an educational challenge for middle and high school students. Committee Co-Chairs are Tsurumi Hamasu and Jan Sakoda.

Hawaii News Now will

rebroadcast "One Puka Puka," which highlights the experiences of the 100th Infantry Battalion in Italy. The two-hour TV special, produced, written and narrated by Bob Jones first aired in 1992, will be shown on Thursday, June 16, at 7 pm on K5; Saturday, June 18, at 7 pm on KGMB; Sunday, June 19, at 3 pm on KHNL



NVL news is published by Nisei Veterans Legacy
2454 S Beretania St., Ste 302, Honolulu, Hawaii 96826
808-942-0881 | inquire@nvlchawaii.org
<https://www.nvlchawaii.org>

Honoring the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Military Intelligence Service, and 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion and all Americans of Japanese Ancestry who served during WWII.