

## 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

### Advisors:

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

[nvlchawaii.org](https://www.nvlchawaii.org)  
[@nvlchawaii](https://www.nvlchawaii.org)



## 17th Annual Nisei Soldiers Memorial Service held at Punchbowl Cemetery

The 17th Annual Nisei Soldiers Memorial Service (NSMS) was held as an in-person event on Sunday, September 25, 2022 at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl. The Nisei Veterans Legacy (NVL) worked with other local Nisei veteran organizations to sponsor the event which honors the Americans of Japanese ancestry soldiers who served our country during WWII. Due to the pandemic, the NVL cancelled the event in 2020 and 2021 but created commemorative videos in its place which can be viewed on the NVL website.

The theme of the service was, *A Legacy for All Generations*, to convey that the historic battlefield and post-war accomplishments of the Nisei soldiers – both men and women – continue to resonate today. In line with this theme, the service incorporated speakers and performers who represented the youth in our community. Three high school students who participated in the Nisei Impact Youth Journalism program produced by a partnership among the NVL, Honolulu Star Advertiser, and Report for America, shared their keen insights about why the Nisei soldier legacy is important to them as young people. In addition, cadets from the JROTC units of Roosevelt, McKinley, Farrington, and Punahou, as well as, from the Hawaii National Guard Youth Challenge Academy had a significant and active supportive presence at the event.

Brendan Po'ohala Burns, an educator and the grandson of the late Governor John A. Burns, was the keynote speaker. Brendan spoke about how his grandfather worked with the Nisei veterans and many others to drive political, social, and economic change in Hawaii because they believed in a more equitable society for all ethnicities. He closed by saying that these courageous actions serve as a reminder to all of us to always stand up against prejudice and for what is right even in the face of tremendous odds.

We were honored to have five Nisei veterans in attendance – Former Governor George Ariyoshi, MIS; Ben Kaito, MIS; Dr. Takashi Manago, 100th/442nd; Jack Nakamura, 100th/442nd; and Wilbert Toda, MIS. We were also pleased that Governor David Ige, Mayor Rick Blangiardi, Consul General Yutaka Aoki, recent Medal of Honor recipient Dennis Fujii (Army), along with many other representatives from veteran, government, and military organizations were able to join the service.

TOP, left to right, Mr. Brendan P. Burns (keynote speaker), Lynn Heirakuji (NVL President), Kristin Alm Kamakahi (emcee). MIDDLE, left to right, Nisei veterans Jack Nakamura, 100th/442nd; Dr. Takashi Manago, 100th/442nd; Gov. George Ariyoshi, MIS; Wilbert Toda, MIS; and Ben Kaito, MIS. BOTTOM, JROTC sponsors with Honor Guard.

For more information and photos go to the NVL website: <https://www.nvlchawaii.org/latest-news/>. A video of the entire event can be viewed on OleloNet at <https://olelo.org/olelonet/>, search "nisei", and on the NVL website.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Last month I had the good fortune to meet **Vonnie Turner**, the widow of the son (Albert) of **Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Farrant Turner**, the beloved first commanding officer of the original **100th Infantry Battalion**. She was in the audience while I was giving a Nisei Soldier presentation here in Honolulu and warmly introduced herself to me after I had finished. It was a pleasure to meet her.

LTC Farrant Turner was affectionately known as "The Old Man" to the men of the 100th and remained a faithful friend to them in post-war Hawaii. He treated the Nisei soldiers with toughness, respect, and affection, and when the 100th landed in North Africa in 1943 he argued that rather than guarding supply trains, these soldiers should be given a combat mission, which led to their attachment to the Army's 34th "Red Bull" Division. LTC Turner continued his life of service after the war by remaining close to the Nisei veterans and steadfastly standing up for them in Hawaii's perilous post-war years.

In today's currency, this may not seem like a remarkable story. But stepping back to the earlier years when local ethnic communities were not given their full measure of respect and when, in fact, the country's leaders were treating the Japanese people with hostility and distrust, LTC Turner's gesture of inclusion is noteworthy.

There were other non-Japanese individuals who, likewise, publicly vouched for the loyalty and worth of the Japanese, often at great personal and professional risk. Men like former Hawaii **Governor John A. Burns** who in the words of Governor George Ariyoshi, "... *demonstrated courage by putting himself on the line to save the people of Japanese ancestry from imprisonment.*" **Robert Shivers**, head of the Honolulu FBI, who forcefully countered rumors of sabotage and also played a key role in blocking the mass incarceration of Hawaii's Japanese. And, of course, **Earl Finch**, a businessman from Hattiesburg, Mississippi who befriended the Nisei soldiers at Camp Shelby and was dubbed the "One Man USO" because of his extraordinary efforts to entertain and look after hundreds of 442nd soldiers before, during, and after their combat experience.



The war and post-war legacy of Hawaii's Nisei soldiers of WWII is powerful and relevant. It includes the contributions of the **many Nisei women** who were ahead of their time and volunteered to serve in the Women's Army Corps and Army Nurse Corps, the courage and vision of the resilient **Issei** who left their homeland in search of a better life for

their children, and the pivotal roles played by many non-Japanese like LTC Turner who in the face of deep animus against Japanese, raised their voices in opposition.

I am encouraged by the vibrancy and meaning of all of these intricately interconnected stories.

**I will be stepping down as NVL President** at the end of this month but will continue to advocate for the preservation of the Nisei soldier legacy and hope that you will do the same. Thank you for your support. It's been a privilege to serve.

Mahalo,  
Lynn Heirakuji  
President, Nisei Veterans Legacy



**LTC Farrant Turner.** Photo from <<https://www.100thbattalion.org/history/veterans/officers/farrant-turner/>> "Coach Col. Turner at an Aloha baseball team practice, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, September 1942 [Courtesy of Sandy Tomai Erlandson]."



**Special Agent in Charge Robert L. Shivers.** FBI photo from <[https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2009/december/shivers\\_120709](https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/stories/2009/december/shivers_120709)>.



**Earl Finch.** Photo from <<https://www.100thbattalion.org/?s=Earl+Finch>> [442nd Regimental Combat Team Archives].



Left to right: Hawaii Congressmembers Spark Matsunaga & Patsy Mink, Pres. Lyndon Johnson, **Gov. John Burns** & Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye. LBJ Library photo by Yoichi Okamoto.



Members of the Women's Army Corps in Hawaii, ca 1940s. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## MEMORIAL DAY

President Heirakuji and VP Yamashita attended the Mayor's and Governor's May 30, 2022, Memorial Day Ceremonies, respectively. The Mayor's event was held at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl and the Governor's event was held at the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery. Both events had been postponed for the past couple of years due to the pandemic. Heirakuji and Yamashita presented an NVL wreath and lei in honor of the many military members who died while in service to our country. Pictured are President Heirakuji (center) with representatives of the Japanese American Veterans Association and the Go for Broke Association at the Mayor's Memorial Day Ceremony.



## SUCCESSFUL NVL FUNDRAISER



The Nisei Veterans Legacy hosted a live fundraiser event on July 28, 2022 at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii. Paul Yonamine (Executive Chairman, Central Pacific Bank; Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Central Pacific Financial Corp.) was the keynote speaker and talked about how the Issei generation's courage and values are embedded in our Nikkei DNA today and provide inspiration to continue our cultural values. The event's theme was "Beyond the Battlefield: The Next Generation" and celebrated the next generation's contributions to perpetuating the legacy of Hawaii's Nisei soldiers. The program featured a youth panel discussion about how educational programs show how the Nisei soldier story is still relevant and important to the young people of today. President Heirakuji, shown above with Yonamine, left, made a presentation about accomplishments and new programs and projects of the NVL.

## HALE RECOGNITION

The NVL received a certificate of commendation from the Hawaii Aloha Life Enrichment Association at their annual anniversary dinner on August 19, 2022 along with a generous donation. VP Yamashita also received a certificate of appreciation for his efforts to improve Japan-U.S. relations. Pictured are VP Yamashita, left, with HALE President Ryozo Sakai.



## BYLAWS UPDATE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The NVL conducted an election in September 2022. Members approved the proposed changes to the Bylaws and Standing Rules. Board member Larry Enomoto was elected to a second term and Dr. Caitlin Shishido was elected as a new board member. Terms are for two years effective September 1, 2022.

## WEBSITE UPDATED

In September, the updated NVL website was made public. The update was a major overhaul of the former website and reflects the change in focus of the NVL from a historical perspective to a more relevant emphasis on the post-war contributions of the Nisei soldiers and their work to create a more equitable and democratic society in Hawaii. Visit <<https://www.nvlchawaii.org/>>.

## OKINAWAN FESTIVAL/PUNAHOU SCHOOL EXHIBITS

The Post-War Contributions of the Nisei Soldiers exhibit was displayed at the Okinawan Festival from September 3-4, 2022 in what was called the Nisei Room at the Hawaii Convention Center. The room was shared with the Maui Nisei Veterans Memorial Center and two exhibits presented by Shari Tamashiro of the Hawaii United Okinawan Association. Hundreds of visitors toured the room and saw the various exhibits. The exhibit was also on display at the Punahou School Cooke Learning Commons and Kosasa Library September 19-23, 2022. Pictured is NVL Board Member Jennifer Okubo Polido, right, with some visitors at the Okinawan Festival.



## VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION AT MAUNALANI NURSING AND REHABILITATION CENTER



The Maunalani Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Honolulu celebrated its in-person Veterans Day program on November 11, 2022. 33 veterans including two Nisei who served during the WWII period were honored with certificates from State and City leaders and Hawaii's Congressional delegation. The 100th Battalion/442nd Infantry Regiment and Punahou JROTC units provided impressive military and musical support. Special speakers (see photo) included Army LTC Ray O'Donnell, left, and Nisei veteran Wilbert Toda (MIS) both of whom shared insights about their military service. President Heirakuji served as emcee for the annual program.

## PEARL HARBOR NATIONAL MEMORIAL (PHNM) HONORS THE NISEI SOLDIERS OF WWII



The U.S. National Park Service (NPS) partnered with the NVL to create and host a program at the PHNM to honor Hawaii's Nisei soldiers. The event was held at the PHNM on November 12, 2022 and included remarks from the NPS staff, President Heirakuji, and a special private boat ride to the USS Arizona. About 50 guests including two Nisei veterans – Wilbert Toda (MIS) and Dr. Takashi Manago (100th Infantry Battalion) - attended the afternoon event.

## ANNUAL MEETING

The NVL Annual Meeting was conducted online on November 20, 2022. The NVL officers and standing committee chairpersons provided updates to the membership on accomplishments during the past year. President Heirakuji announced her plans to step down effective the end of the year and that Director Larry Enomoto would step forward as the Interim President for the remainder of her term. See President's Message.

## JAPAN-U.S. JOINT MEMORIAL CEREMONY AT FORD ISLAND

Incoming Interim President Enomoto and VP Yamashita represented the NVL and MIS Education Society of Hawaii at the annual ceremony to memorialize those killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The joint ceremony by the Navy Region Hawaii and the Japanese Consulate of Honolulu was held on December 8, 2022. The keynote speaker was Superintendent Tom Leatherman of the Pearl Harbor National Memorial.

# PRESENTATIONS

## RADFORD HIGH SCHOOL

On May 4, 2022 VP Yamashita made a presentation with JCCH representatives Betsy Young and Jane Kurahara to Radford High School students. Betsy and Jane talked about their experiences as young girls during WWII and Byrnes talked about the Nisei soldiers. Radford High School teacher, Ms. Suzanne Goodrich wrote, "Mahalo for your work in helping to deliver a powerful, relevant presentation to Radford's students". Shown at left, left to right, first row Byrnes Yamashita, Jane Kurahara, Betsy Young. Second row Radford HS teachers.



## UH MANOA JAPANESE STUDIES

President Heirakuji gave a presentation on July 15, 2022 to a UH Japanese Cultural Studies undergraduate class. After the presentation, the diverse group of students participated in a lively discussion about how the Nisei Soldier legacy is still relevant today. For example, parallels were drawn between the WWII incarceration experience of the Japanese and how Muslims were targeted after 9/11. This was Heirakuji's 4th time speaking to one of the UH's classes.

## USA CITY JAPAN / MILIANI MIDDLE SCHOOLS

On August 17, 2022 VP Yamashita made an online presentation about the Nisei soldiers to students from six middle schools in Usa City, Oita Prefecture, Japan and students from Mililani Middle School in Hawaii.



## GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



On Veterans Day, VP Yamashita made an online presentation to an audience in Grand Rapids, Michigan which was learning about the Nisei soldiers and honoring the life of veteran Virgil Nishimura Westdale, who served with the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion and participated in the liberation of concentration camp survivors of sub-camps of the Dachau Concentration Camp.

## ARCADIA

President Heirakuji delivered a presentation on the Nisei Soldier story to residents of the Arcadia Retirement Residence on November 28, 2022. Many in the audience had compelling stories of their own to share about living through WWII and its aftermath including one who was interned in a mainland incarceration camp and another who visited her father at Honouliuli Internment Camp.



## JAPANESE ORGANIZATION REPS

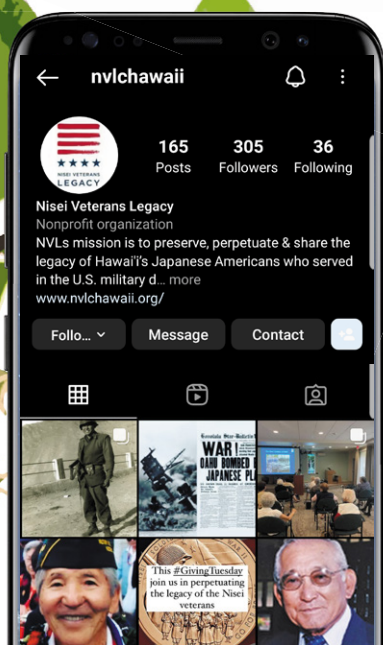


President Heirakuji gave a presentation on the Nisei soldier story to representatives from the Hiroshima Peace Scholarship, Hawaii Heiwa Scholarship, and the Japan-America Society of Hawaii (JASH), on December 8, 2022. The two scholarship programs were created by Hiromi Peterson and Naomi Hirano-Omizo, both former Punahou instructors, to build a student exchange opportunity for learning about the WWII experience and peace building. Funding for the programs is now administered by the JASH.

Pictured left to right, Hiromi Peterson, Momoka Narasaki (Hawaii Heiwa Scholarship), Lynn Heirakuji, Christianne Ono (JASH), Naomi Hirano-Omizo.



Follow us on Instagram



**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.*