

**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.**

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:

Larry Enomoto
INTERIM PRESIDENT

Byrnes Yamashita
VICE PRESIDENT

Kristin Alm Kamakahi
TREASURER

Phyllis Hironaka
SECRETARY

Directors:

Micah Benevitz
Lynn Heirakuji
Phyllis Hironaka
Kristin Alm Kamakahi
Jennifer Okubo Polido
Caitlin Shishido
Bill Wright
Warren Yamamoto
Byrnes Yamashita

Advisors:

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

nvlchawaii.org

The Refocused Message – Two Years Later

In the February 2021 newsletter, the NVL announced our transition from a historic preservation focus to be more of a thought leader and agent for change. We decided on this approach to make the Nisei Soldier story more relevant to the issues of today and appeal to the younger generations. While retaining our commitment to historical content, we sought to expand our perspective to include larger, current day events affecting our community.

Working with Nathan Hokama of Strategic Communications Solutions, we developed a series of message themes to support this new focus to guide our communications and educational components. In this issue we are updating you, our supporters, on how we incorporated our message themes.

The message themes developed to support the new focus are the foundation for our educational content and outreach efforts. They are:

- » Values such as loyalty, honor, and patriotism influenced young Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) to serve in the military during World War II despite overt prejudice and discrimination against them.
- » After the war, having proven their loyalty beyond all doubt, Nisei Veterans worked with Hawaii's unique multi-ethnic coalitions to break down the institutional barriers of the "plantation society" and create a more equitable society.
- » Understanding and perpetuating the Nisei Soldier legacy can inspire current and future generations to continue fighting for racial and social equality, and justice for all.



In 2021, the NVL reached out to the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Honolulu Chapter to partner in their efforts for the protection of civil and human rights of all. Then-JACL Vice President Minda Yamaga attended an

NVL board meeting and discussed their organization and programs and then-NVL President Heirakuji also attended one of their board meetings to share our programs.

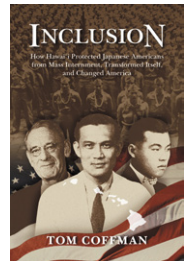
In February 2022, we supported the JACL special event for the Day of Remembrance to commemorate the 80th

anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066 which authorized the evacuation and incarceration of over 110,000 Nikkei from the military areas on the West Coast based solely on their ethnicity.

Yamaga is now the President of the JACL Honolulu Chapter and will be the Keynote Speaker at the annual Nisei Soldier

Memorial Service in September.

Also in 2022, we donated \$5,000 to advance the publishing of William Kaneko's book about the forced relocation of Japanese families during World War II due to their proximity to military bases. The book is expected to be published later this year.



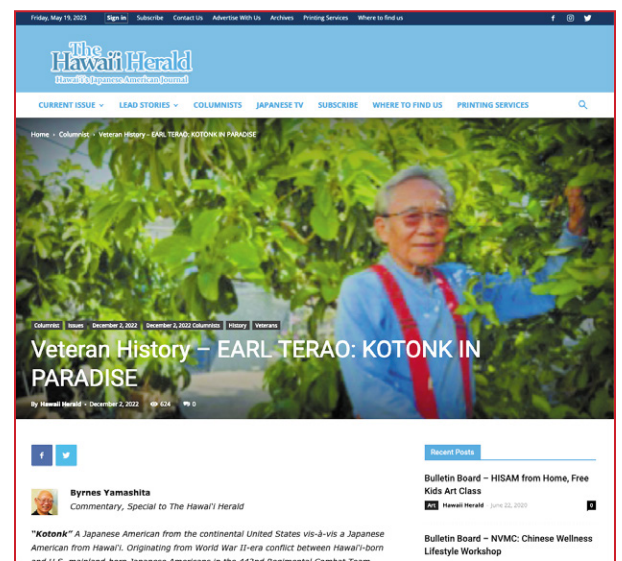
In September 2022, we coordinated a book event with the group, A Discussion on Race and Ethnicity or ADORE, about Tom Coffman's book, "Inclusion: How Hawaii Protected Japanese Americans from Mass Internment, Transformed Itself, and Changed America". The book documents how an inclusive community worked to protect an embattled segment of its population during World War II (WWII), the Nikkei.



DENSHO
densho.org

We also supported the Densho fundraiser events in 2021 and 2022. Densho is a non-profit based in Seattle dedicated to preserving the story of the Nikkei incarceration during WWII and motivating young people to become advocates for fair and equitable treatment of all ethnicities.

Vice President Byrnes Yamashita is writing a series of articles about Hawaii families that experienced incarceration *Continues on page 2.*





NVL Vice President Byrnes Yamashita, left, met with students from Fukushima, Japan, and Honolulu's Iolani School to discuss the relevance of the Nisei Soldier story to their generation..

The Refocused Message ...

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during WWII for the *Hawaii Herald*. The aim of the series is to increase the understanding of what these families experienced so that people here in Hawaii, which largely escaped the mass incarceration, can have more empathy for them and be moved to advocate for others.

The NVL website was completely revamped in 2022 under the guidance of Heirakuji to reflect these themes. These changes completed the transition to the new educational focus.

The next themes were aimed at reaching the Japanese audience here in Hawaii and in Japan:

» *Cultural values of the Hawaii Nikkei helped*

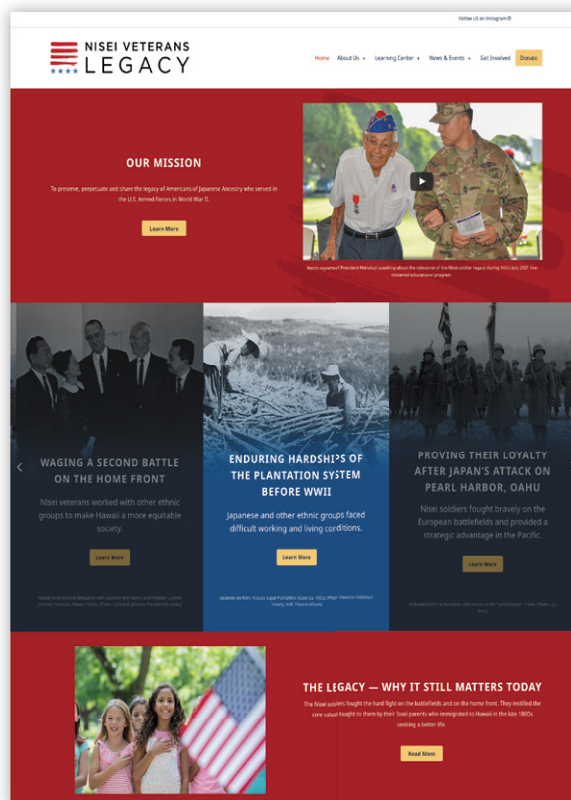
Nisei Soldiers overcome hardships and achieve major victories on and off the battlefield.

» *Nisei Veterans played a key role in healing the wounds of war between the U.S. and Japan, as well as, in rebuilding and solidifying the cultural and economic relationship between Hawaii and Japan.*

Vice President Yamashita presented these themes to middle school students from Usa City, Japan in 2021 and 2022 via online meetings. In September 2022, the NVL was presented a Certificate of Appreciation and donation from the Hawaii Aloha Life Enrichment (HALE) association for our contributions in fostering relations between Japan and the U.S. HALE is a non-profit organization whose members are primarily Japanese and interested in Hawaiian culture and history.

These themes were also included in a presentation to the Rainbow Kids from Japan in March 2023 at the 100th Infantry Battalion clubhouse. The Rainbow Kids are orphans from the 2011 Fukushima Earthquake and Tsunami. Students from Iolani School also attended the presentation.

In summary, the transition to the new messages and themes has been completed over the past two years and we are committed to this direction in establishing the relevance to the Nisei Soldier story to modern times. We hope that you agree.



The homepage of NVL's revamped website

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



When **Lynn Heirakuji** stepped down as President at the end of last year, I willingly stepped forward

to lead the organization through the remainder of her term. I look forward to serving as Interim President for the remainder of 2023..

Lynn led us through many organizational improvements, the shift of our educational content (see lead article) and greatly expanded our communications outreach through different media events.

She also recruited some new board members to assist us with our focus on the younger generations. We are very grateful for her leadership and hard work.

We've started planning the annual **Nisei Soldiers Memorial Service** at Punchbowl National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific on Sunday morning, September 24, 2023.

The NVL is in a satisfactory financial position. Our treasury was boosted last year by some generous donors and a successful fundraiser effort led by **Director Jennifer Okubo Polido**. This year, we applied and received a grant from the **State's Grant-in-Aid Program**. We also received a grant from the **Kosasa Family Foundation**. At this time, there is no plan for a fundraiser event thanks to these successful efforts.

We are working on updating the **NVL Strategic Plan**. The Plan, when updated, will lay out what the Nisei Veterans Legacy will focus on over the next three to five years. I hope to report back in the next issue.

I look forward to working with all of our supporters during the rest of the year.

Mahalo,
Larry Enomoto
2023 Interim President



Lynn

ANNOUNCEMENTS



THANK YOU & ALOHA, SHIRLEY

Sadly, long time NVL supporter Shirley Igarashi passed away in April 2023. Shirley served as our office staff volunteer for several years. We will miss her cheery smile and personality.



CHANGE OF NVL LEADERSHIP

Lynn Heirakuji stepped down from her position as President at the end of 2022 and is staying on as a Director. Director Larry Enomoto was selected by the board to serve as Interim President for the remainder of her term through the end of 2023. Larry's first President's message is on Page 2. We greatly appreciate Lynn's exemplary leadership and hard work over the past few years. Among her many accomplishments, she led the NVL through organizations improvements, a new communications focus and a total revamp of the website.



NEW BOARD MEMBER

New director Micah Benevitz who recently joined the NVL board is currently a high school history teacher at Mililani High School, and President of the Wahiawa Community Business Association (WCBA). He earned a bachelors degree in History and Political Science, a masters in Education from Chaminade University, and a masters in World and European History from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His grandfather was in the MIS, and his granduncle was in the 100th Infantry Battalion and killed in action near Monte Cassino in January 1944.



MIS AT 80

The Military Intelligence Service Veterans Education Society of Hawaii is planning an 80th MIS Anniversary event at the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii on Sunday, August 20, 2023.

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NISEI SOLDIER MEMORIAL SERVICE

The annual Nisei Soldier Memorial Service is scheduled for Sunday, September 24, 2023 at 9:30 a.m. at the National Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl. Please save the date and plan to join us.



NVL STRATEGIC PLAN

The NVL will be updating the 2016 Strategic Plan in the coming months. Stay tuned for results in the next newsletter.

FOCUS ON THE YOUTH

The NVL continues our focus on passing on the story of the Nisei Soldiers to the younger generations. This emphasis shapes all our educational efforts including communications, events, website, presentations, exhibits and articles.

INSTAGRAM

Recognizing that most young people obtain their information from their phone devices, we created an Instagram account with the aim to issue a post at least once a week. Our account now has over 300 followers and is maintained by Director Caitlin Shishido (pictured above as a toddler with her grandfather Yukio Naguwa from Hilo who served with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team). See item on NVL Instagram account below.



SCHOLARSHIPS

This year, the NVL provided \$2,000 in scholarship donations to fourteen cadets in four local JROTC programs in recognition of their support of the Nisei Soldier legacy and commitment to upholding strong citizenship values. Cadets from Farrington High School, McKinley High School, Punahou School, and Roosevelt High School programs enthusiastically participated in the annual Nisei Soldier Memorial Service held at Punchbowl Cemetery by serving as escorts, flag bearers and even performers. Each school determined which cadets were most deserving of the scholarship awards and held ceremonies to award them. Below, clockwise, are awardees from Farrington, Punahou, and McKinley.



NISEI SOLDIER MEMORIAL SERVICE

Over 100 JROTC cadets and sponsors, Boy Scouts, and cadets from the Teen Youth Challenge program, participated in last year's annual Nisei Soldier Memorial Service in September at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl.

Follow us on Instagram



SAGE TOTTORI INITIATES A PUNCHBOWL GRAVESITE LOCATOR PROJECT

Boy Scout Sage Tottori noticed many families struggling to find their loved one's gravesite at Punchbowl. A senior at Island Pacific Academy, Tottori, shown below with NVL's Lynn Heirakuji, was on the hunt for a project to earn Eagle Scout status and was inspired to help those families he'd seen at the cemetery.

Sage reached out to then-NVL President Heirakuji (see photo at right) who began contacting various Nisei veterans groups in the state to compile a list of names of those buried at Punchbowl. Using the list, Sage and his mother Kimberly spent Sundays looking for and geo-tagging 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion or Military Intelligence Service gravesites. They were later joined by friends and family to hasten the process for some 1,800 graves.

For Heirakuji, the most exciting thing about the project was that it was carried out by Tottori and other community youths. "It's the youth who will perpetuate the legacy of the Nisei Soldiers — local youth who are finding the Nisei Soldier story so interesting that they want to do something like this," she said.



EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

Director Micah Benevitz, a Mililani High School history teacher, is developing a curriculum about the Nisei Soldiers that will include an animated video created by Director Bill Wright about the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion. Bill's father served as Executive Officer of the 522 FAB.



In addition to the new curriculum, NVL representatives also make presentations to student groups along with military and civic organizations.

NISEI IMPACT YOUTH JOURNALISM PROGRAM

The NVL partnered with the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* in an educational project which taught youth about journalism and the Nisei Soldier story. Five high school students participated and wrote stories about Nisei Soldiers. A recognition ceremony was held at the Maunalani Nursing and Rehab Center where two of the Nisei veterans who were interviewed resided.



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