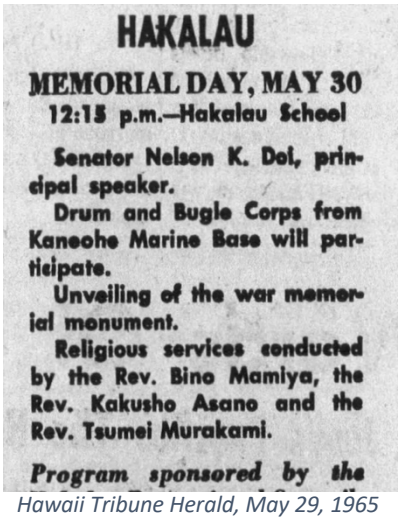
Hakalau Remembers
Memorial Day 2024

What began in 1945 as a quest to honor the 12 young men from the Hakalau area who died in World War II, took 20 years to become a reality. This monument was first unveiled at a Memorial Day Service on May 30, 1965. Over time, 4 more names were added from other wars and conflicts: World War I, Korea, and Viet Nam. Thankfully, we've lost none to subsequent wars.



HAKALAU

MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 30
12:15 p.m.—Hakalau School

Senator Nelson K. Doi, principal speaker.

Drum and Bugle Corps from Kaneohe Marine Base will participate.

Unveiling of the war memorial monument.

Religious services conducted by the Rev. Bino Mamiya, the Rev. Kakusho Asano and the Rev. Tsumei Murakami.

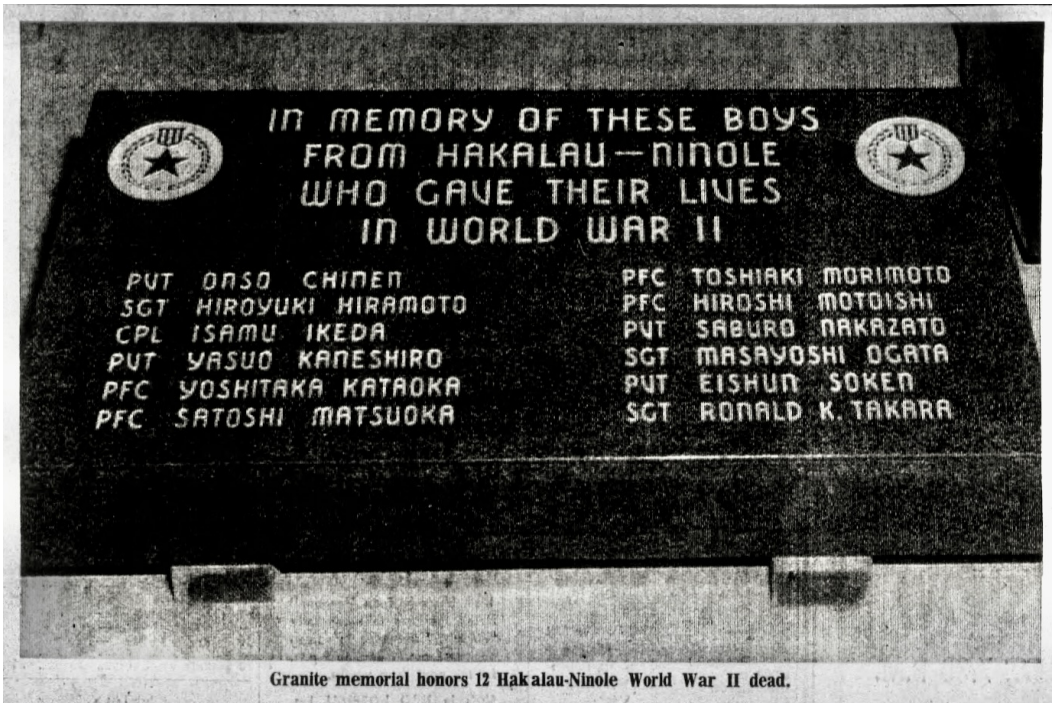
Program sponsored by the

Hawaii Tribune Herald, May 29, 1965

They came from the area extending from Kolekole to Ninole.

Our cultural values include honoring those who came before us. Hakalau memorial services for each soldier have always been well-attended and usually included speeches by community leaders. Services have been held annually at Hakalau Veterans Park on Memorial Day weekend and continue to this day.

Let us honor and remember each of these boys and young men who died protecting freedom.



Granite memorial honors 12 Hakalau-Ninole World War II dead.

The original monument unveiled in 1965, Hawaii Tribune Herald, May 19, 1965

One Killed in WWI

PVT THOMAS SMITH, September 2, 1918

Thomas Smith arrived in Hilo from Edinburgh, Scotland in January 1912--age 22, 5 feet 4 1/2 inches tall, fair skin, light hair, blue eyes. He soon started work as a luna in Honohina and remained in that position for over 5 years until leaving for Canada with another Hakalau luna, bound for the Front. He had registered for the U.S. draft in Hawaii as an "alien" from Britain in July 1917 but, in October 1917, finally joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces in Vancouver.

By March 1918, Hakalau Plantation had gained a reputation for the large number of "Britishers" going to the WWI front. Plantation Manager John M. Ross had 12 stars on the service flag at the Hakalau office. Thankfully, only one was killed.

PVT Thomas Smith died of wounds received in action on the Western Front (France) on September 2, 1918, about 11 months after enlisting. He was buried at Fabourg-d'Amiens Cemetery in the town of Arras, France.

Twelve Killed in WWII

Their upbringing: These 12 men came from various camps throughout Hakalau Plantation including Wailea, Hakalau Up and Down Camps, Chin Chuck, Kamaee Mauka, Honohina and Ninole. They were all Nisei, with parents having immigrated in the period from 1893 to 1916. Many went to Japanese Language School after regular school and were in the Young Buddhist Association. They also attended quite a range of community activities from baseball to Boy Scouts. Most went to Hakalau School or John M. Ross School. Most graduated from Hilo High, some from Laupahoehoe High. While the Plantation wanted them in its workforce, their teachers often instilled a desire to look beyond that.

Their induction into the Army: Over half of them had been in plantation work at jobs like field laborer, electrician, carpenter and store clerk. The rest had moved to Honolulu and were working as electricians or going to business school. Some were already in the Hawaii National Guard before December 7th and later joined the newly formed 100th Battalion. Newspapers show that an occasion such as a Chicken Hekka dinner was often held in Hakalau to honor these men as they enlisted.

Their service: Ten of the 12 were with the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team as it fought in numerous battles starting with Cassino, Italy after landing in Salerno in September 1943; then France from September 1944 to March 1945; and ending up

back in Italy in April 1945 for a surprise attack on Nazi mountainside positions for which the unit received yet another Presidential Unit Citation.

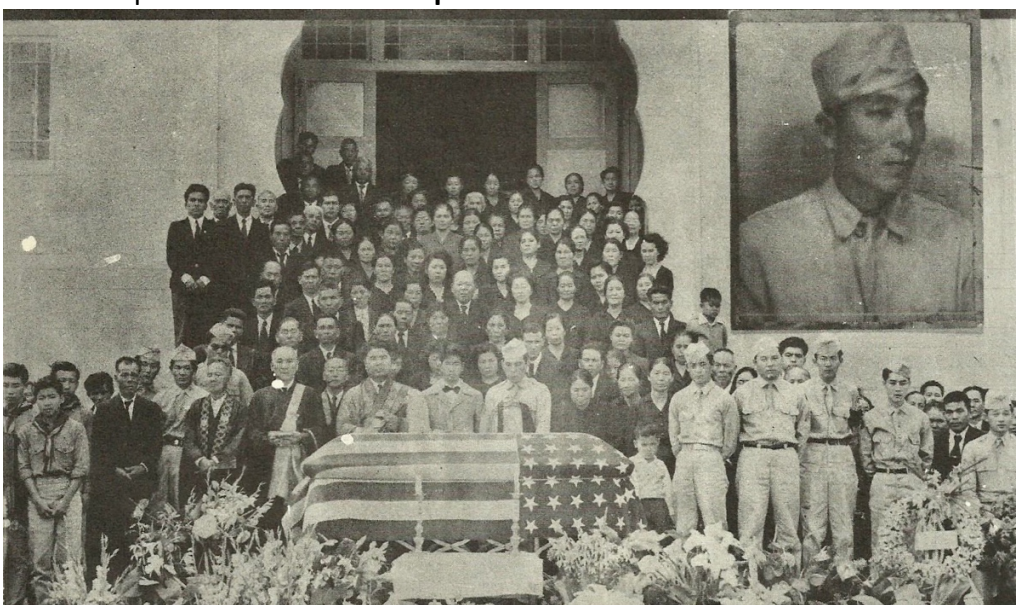
Nine of these Hakalau men were lost in the period of 12 months from November 1943 to November 1944, with the last dying in a plane crash right after the war ended. Two others died. One by a submarine torpedo 30 miles north of Upolu Point and the other drown by accident while in training as an interpreter.

Here, in order of date killed, are the 10 who served with the highly decorated 100th Battalion/ 442nd Regimental Combat team:

PVT ONSO CHINEN, November 29, 1943
Onso's father had immigrated in 1901 and his mother in 1912. Onso was raised in Chin Chuck, graduated from Hakalau, then worked for Hakalau Plantation until he enlisted in June 1941, months before the December 7th attack.

PVT Chinen was killed on the Mediterranean front while serving with the 100th Battalion. The 100th had landed in Salerno, Italy on September 22, 1943, and Onso was killed on November 29, 2 months after their first casualty. The objectives for the 100th on that day were to the vicinity of Cerasuola and then to Cardito, villages about 35 miles from Salerno. Casualties were heavy and they were stopped on Hill 832 by well-entrenched enemy groups. By this time, and after much fighting, the 100th had already earned its reputation.

Survived by his mother, 3 brothers and 4 sisters, his remains were returned to the Big Isle in February 1949 for burial at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo. A month later, services were held for him at the Hakalau Jodo Mission. A picture of the attendees was taken in front of the mission with the caption **"The silent triumphant return of Private Onso Chinen."**



Later, in November 1954, he was interred at Punchbowl, his final resting place.

CPL ISAMU IKEDA, January 10, 1944

Isamu Ikeda

Isamu grew up in Ninole. His parents had immigrated in 1889. His father was a carpenter and his mother a storekeeper. Isamu was 1 of 8 children. After Laupahoehoe School, Isamu went on to graduate from Hilo High, class of 1936. When he enlisted in June 1941, months before Pearl Harbor, he had been working in Pahala for the Plantation.

CPL Ikeda was 25 and a combat medic when he was killed at the Italian front on January 10, 1944. This is when the 100th Battalion was involved in the bloody battle of Monte Cassino. By this time, it had come to be known as **"The Purple Heart Battalion."**

Memorial services were held in Pahala for him and 2 others in April 1944 with about 200 attending. In 1948, the remains of four Big Isle soldiers who died in this Cassino battle were returned for burial at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo. A service was then held at what is now the Honohina Hongwanji in Ninole.

SGT MASAYOSHI "BANTA" OGATA, January 25, 1944

Masayoshi was raised in Up Camp Hakalau, attended Hakalau School and later graduated from McKinley High School on Oahu in 1936. His father had immigrated in 1893 and worked as an engineer in the Hakalau Mill. Masayoshi was 26 years old and an electrician at Hakalau Plantation before being inducted into the Army on March 24, 1941, well before the December 7th attack. He was the first in Hakalau to volunteer. He and others were honored at a Hakalau dinner including Plantation Manager John M. Ross, Hakalau School Principal Eugene Capellas and Reverend Mamiya of the Hakalau Jodo Mission.

Masayoshi Ogata

SGT Ogata was in the 100th Battalion Company D when it landed at Salerno, Italy in late September 1943, and was killed on January 25, 1944 near Cassino in the opening months of the battle of Cassino. In an account of that day, *"[the 100th] fought a series of advances and withdrawals through mine-wire defensive belts, without the benefit of armor, and under the registered German guns, eventually securing a shallow bridgehead on the west side of the Rapido [River]".*

Services were held in Hakalau at the Japanese Language School next to the Jodo Mission and a moment of silence was observed at the opening of the Hakalau baseball season for their former "star player." He was survived by his parents, 5 sisters and 4 brothers. He is buried at Alae Cemetery.

PFC HIROSHI MOTOISHI, March 20, 1944

Hiroshi Motoishi

Hiroshi was born and raised in Kamaee Mauka. His father had immigrated in 1906 and was a sugar cane contractor. He went to Hakalau School and later graduated from Hilo High in 1939. First a laborer at Hakalau Plantation, by 1941 he was an electrician living in Honolulu. He enlisted in November 1941, weeks before the December 7th attack.

PFC Motoishi served with the 100th Infantry Battalion and was killed near Cassino on March 20, 1944, less than 4 months after the 100th had taken its first casualty.

Surviving him were his parents, a brother and a sister. He was buried in 1949 at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo.

PFC SATOSHI MATSUOKA, May 20, 1944

Born and raised in Honohina Mauka, Satoshi graduated from Laupahoehoe High School in 1942. Active in scouting, he was Senior Patrol Leader of the Honohina Group and was awarded the Life Scout Badge. He had been working for Hakalau Plantation when he enlisted in March of 1943.

Satoshi Matsuoka

PFC Matsuoka served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit, 100th Infantry Battalion, Company B. His unit landed in Anzio at the end of March of 1944 and fought for 2 months to maintain its beachhead before advancing to capture Rome on June 5. Satoshi was killed in this Anzio to Rome Campaign on May 20, 1944.

In June 1944, memorial services were held at the Honohina Hongwanji Temple. He was survived by his parents, a sister and two brothers, one of whom was at Camp Savage, Minnesota training to interrogate prisoners of war and translate captured documents.

PVT YASUO KANESHIRO, June 2, 1944

Yasuo Kaneshiro

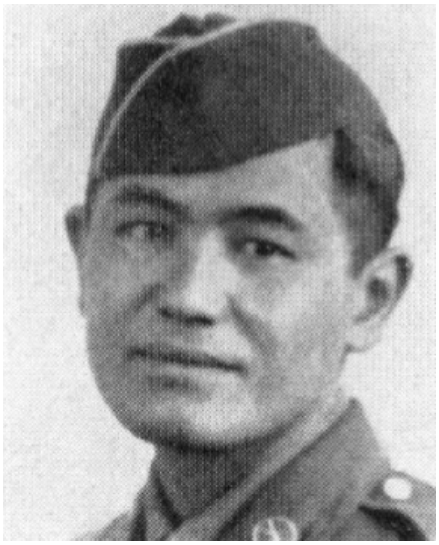
Yasuo went to Hakalau School, then Hilo High. Before entering the service, he was a store clerk at the Wailea Milling Company, adjacent to Hakalau Plantation. He joined the Army in March 1943 when the call came to form the 442nd.

PVT Kaneshiro served with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 100th Battalion, Company B. On June 2, 1944, the 100th was in battle around Lanuvio, Italy, about 19 miles southeast of Rome - the push on the final German stronghold south of Rome. He was killed on that day. He was awarded a Bronze Star.

In July 1944 memorial services were held in Hakalau at the Eugene Capellas Hall at Hakalau School, including several community leaders serving as speakers. He was survived by his parents, 2 sisters and 4 brothers, and was buried at Punchbowl.

PFC BENNY SABURO NAKAZATO, July 9, 1944

Benny lived in Stable Camp, Chin Chuck. He had gone to Hakalau School, graduated from Hilo High and had started at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. On December 7th, he had been working at Pearl Harbor and rescued his wounded boss. He returned to the Big Isle and, in March 1943, enlisted in the Army.



Benny Saboru Nakazato

About 2 weeks before he was killed, his unit, the 100th/442nd, had captured the strongly held town of Belvedere, Italy for which they were given the highest award for a military unit - the Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation. They continued up the west coast of Italy where Benny was killed by artillery on July 9, 1944. He was awarded the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster for having been wounded on more than one occasion.

PFC Nakazato was survived by his parents, a sister and 2 brothers, one of whom was also fighting with the 100th in Italy at the time. Services were held at the Hakalau Japanese Language School in August 1944 with about 400 persons attending. First interred at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo, he was finally buried at Punchbowl when it was dedicated in 1949.

PFC TOSHIAKI "TOSHI" MORIMOTO, October 18, 1944

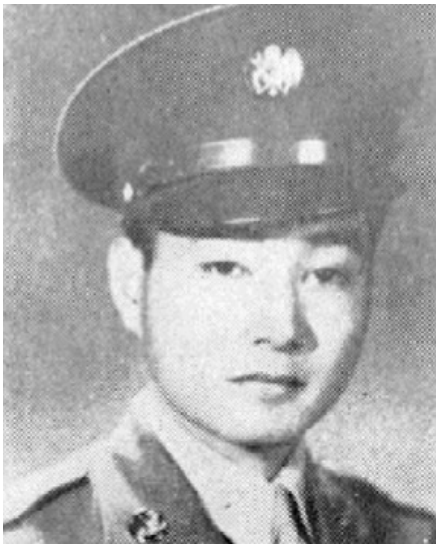
Toshiaki was born and raised in Down Camp Hakalau. He grew up playing basketball and participating in various community activities. He went to Hakalau School and Hilo High School but, following the death of his mother in 1938, was employed as a carpenter with the Plantation until enlisting in March of 1943. He was honored in Hakalau at a Chicken Hekka dinner right before his induction.

PFC Morimoto was in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 2nd Battalion, F Company. He was killed by artillery fire on October 18, 1944 during an almost continuous four-day firefight in freezing and rainy weather for the strongly fortified hill that dominated Bruyeres, a small town in northeast France. The Battle of Bruyères and the rescue of the "Lost Texas Battalion" is now considered to be one of the ten major military battles fought by the United States Armed Forces.

After receiving his remains in 1948, memorial and interment services were held with participation by the AJA Veterans Council, the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the 442nd Co. F Boys. He was survived by his father (a carpenter for the Plantation), 2 brothers and 5 sisters.

SGT RONALD TAKARA, November 1, 1944

Ronald lived in Chin Chuck Stable Camp. He went to Hakalau School and graduated from Hilo High in 1939 before moving to Honolulu for business school. At the time he enlisted in November 1941, he was working as a bookkeeper at Lewers and Cooke, Ltd. in Honolulu.



Ronald Takara

SGT Takara had recently been wounded in battle when, on November 1, 1944, he died along with 14 other Allied and German wounded soldiers in a C-47 plane crash near the village of Doizieux in central France. He was with the 100th Battalion, B Company fighting in both Italy and France, and had just been in the fight to rescue the "Lost Battalion" in the Vosges Mountains in eastern France. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

Memorial services were held for him in E. S. Capellas hall in December 1944 under the sponsorship of the Hawaii Morale Group AJA Committee, Hakalau District with the assistance of the Chin Chuck Mauka Youth Organization. He is interred in the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

SGT HIROYUKI HIRAMOTO, November 28, 1945

Hiroyuki Hiramoto

Hiroyuki Hiramoto was born and raised in Ninole in an extended family of parents, grandmother, uncle, brothers and sisters. His father had immigrated in 1906 and farmed sugar cane. Hiroyuki played basketball and was involved in the Future Farmers of America. By September 1940 he had started work in Honolulu after graduating from Laupahoehoe School. When he volunteered for service in March 1943, he had been working for Hawaiian Electric in Honolulu.

He went overseas in March 1944 and fought through the Italy and France Campaigns, serving with the 442nd Infantry Regiment as a radio technician. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

Hiroyuki Hiramoto was enroute home after the war on an Army transport C-47 when it crashed near Auburn California on November 28, 1945. He died 3 days later. SGT Hiramoto was 23 years old. Services were held at the Fort Street Hongwanji in Honolulu and his remains were finally interred at Punchbowl in July 1949.

TWO YOUNG MEN NEVER ARRIVED OVERSEAS TO FIGHT:

PFC YEISHUN ALLEN SOKEN, January 28, 1942

Killed off the Big Isle by a Japanese submarine torpedo

Yeishun Allen Soken

Yeishun Soken grew up in Waiakea Uka, Up Camp Hakalau and Wailea where his father worked for the Plantation. His father had immigrated from Okinawa in 1907. Eishun had been working for the Wailea Milling Company for 8 years from age 16 then he enlisted voluntarily in Nov 1941, right before the December 7th attack. On January 28, 1942, PFC Soken and 25 other Big Isle soldiers were bound for Kawaihae Harbor on the Royal T. Frank after boot camp at Schofield Barracks on Oahu. About 30 miles north of Upolu Point, the ship was struck by a Japanese submarine torpedo. Seventeen of the 26 Big Isle soldiers were killed. The remaining 9 went on to serve throughout the war. All survived.

Services were held on February 5, 1942 at the family's Wailea home. Included were Rev. Sokabe of the Honomu Japanese Christian Church, Yeishun's parents, two brothers and two sisters.

See an expanded bio at **https://nhdsilentheroes.org/profiles/yeishun-allen-soken/.**

PFC ALVIN YOSHITAKA KATAOKA, June 4, 1944

Drowned in an accident while training at Camp Savage, Minnesota

Alvin's father immigrated in 1907 and became a sugar cane farmer in Kamaee Mauka. Alvin was raised there and participated in many Hakalau community activities. He went to Hakalau School, graduated from Hilo High in 1941 and was a student at the Honolulu Business School at the time he volunteered in January 1944. Before departing, he was honored by the Hakalau community along with 4 others at a Chicken Hekka dinner.

PFC Kataoka was stationed at Camp Savage, Minnesota Military Intelligence language school in training to prepare for interrogating prisoners of war and translating captured documents in the Pacific theater of war. He died in a drowning accident at a nearby lake on June 4, 1944.

Memorial services were held in the Kamaee Mauka hall where several speakers commemorated his life. He was survived by his parents, 3 brothers and 2 sisters. He was finally put to rest at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo in February 1950.

One Killed in the Korean War

CPL JUN MATSUSHIGE, November 29, 1952

Jun was born and raised in Ninole. He went to John M. Ross School in Honohina and graduated from Laupahoehoe High School in 1950. He was drafted in November 1951 while working for Yamane Contractor in Kukuihaele.

Jun Matsushige

CPL Matsushige was fighting with the 223rd Infantry Regiment in the North Korea sector when he was seriously wounded on Nov 13, 1952. He was taken to Japan for hospital care and died there on Nov 29, 1952.

A prayer service was held at the Ninole family home on December 3, 1952, with the Rev. Takeo Akegarasu minister Hilo Higashi Hongwanji officiating. Then, in January 1953, hundreds of relatives, friends and neighbors attended a funeral service for him. Following the service, military rites were held at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo. Six Ninole veterans served as his pallbearers. He was survived by his mother, 3 brothers and a sister.

Two Killed in the Vietnam War

Bobby Barcena

SPC4 BOBBY BARCENA, February 27, 1967

Bobby grew up in Spanish Camp, Hakalau, attended Hakalau School and graduated from Hilo High in 1965 where he was on the track team and known as a good sprinter. His father had immigrated from the Philippines in 1928 and worked for the Plantation.

SPC4 Barcena was a field radio repairer with the 1st Signal Brigade, 37th Signal Battalion, 21st Signal Group, A Company. He was killed near Danang on February 27, 1967, in a Viet Cong mortar attack. He was 19 years old and had been in Vietnam for less than 2 months. Also killed in the attack were three other soldiers and a marine who were near communications vans loaded with electronics gear.

He was survived by his parents, 3 brothers and 5 sisters. On March 9, 1967, a Requiem High Mass was held for him at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church near where he grew up. In March 1967, a resolution introduced by Big Island Senator John Ushijima expressing sympathy to Bobby's family was passed. Also in March, the 5th grade class at Hakalau School wrote poems and essays in his memory.

Lester Alipio

SGT LESTER ALIPIO, February 18, 1971

Lester was from Down Camp Hakalau. He went to Hakalau School and later graduated from Hilo High in 1967. His father was a machinist for the Plantation. In 1967, when Lester was a drafting student at Hawaii Tech, he won 1st place in designing a model home. He later worked with the Department of Public Works as a draftsman until he volunteered for the Army.

SGT Alipio went to Vietnam in 1970 with the 213/510th Engineer Detachment where he designed a pocket patch then worn by each soldier as the official unit insignia. Although his death in Vinh Long, Vietnam on February 18, 1971 was due to a stroke, he was later awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his actions, posthumously.

A Requiem Mass was held at the Hakalau Catholic Church in February 1971. He is buried at the Veterans Cemetery in Hilo.