

STATE OF HAWAII  
OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES  
TESTIMONY ON H.B. No. 473, RELATING KAUAI VETERANS CEMETERITS  
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION, BUSINESS, & MILITARY  
AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY 17, 2009

Good afternoon Chair Angus L.K. McKelvey, Vice-Chair Isaac W. Choy, and members of the House Committee on Economic Revitalization, Business, & Military Affairs

I am Mark Moses, Director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I appreciate this opportunity to support the intent of HB 473, which seeks to appropriate moneys for fiscal year 2009-2010 and fiscal year 2010-2011 for the repair and maintenance of the Kauai Veterans Cemetery.

The OVS supports the intent of this measure as long as its implementation does not impact or replace the priorities set forth in the Executive Biennium Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2010.

In accordance with HRS section 363.5, the Neighbor Island county councils are solely responsible to provide for the operation, repair, and maintenance of veterans cemeteries located within their respective counties.

OVS does have oversight responsibility for all veteran cemeteries in the state (other than the National Cemetery at Punchbowl), and ensures Veterans Administration (VA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) regulations are followed. We also make certain that cemetery upgrades, expansions, and additions meet the prescribed standards by seeking NCA pre-approval.

Additionally, OVS does and has requested Capitol Improvement Projects and applies for NCA State Cemetery Grants as applicable. These grants must be pre-approved and NCA must be involved in all phases of the project.

Currently, \$8 million has been approved, pre-approved or is in discussion with the NCA for cemetery projects.

For Kauai, you will notice that in my brief to the House Finance Committee and to the Senate Ways and Means Committee, I indicated a requirement for \$2,155,000 for 14 Columbaria Statewide. Three of these Columbaria with 192 Niches are for Kauai Veterans Cemetery.

I also indicated \$1,033,000 for a Maintenance Facility, New Gates (not arch), and signage (both gate and highway) at the cemetery awaiting further county input and NCA (VA) approval. This project would replace the items (4) and (6) in this measure and may be 100% reimbursable.

Finally, I am seeking land for an expansion of the Kauai Veterans Cemetery Phase II. After obtaining the land, I will petition the NCA for funds necessary for the expansion.

These projects arose as a result of the assessment conducted by OVS and have been discussed with the former Kauai Mayor, Council, County Parks and Recreation Personnel, Veterans of and with the NCA. All planning will be in coordination with the current entities.

Any monies given to the County for repairs and maintenance and not for NCA approved projects are a Grant-in-Aid and are never reimbursable.

We support the intent of HB 473, however given the above information, we ask the committee to consider that while the state can and does promote capital improvement projects for expansion and new facilities at all veteran cemeteries, given our current economic circumstances, it may not be practical to implement the Grant-In-Aid contained in this measure at this time.

Thank you for allowing me to present the Veterans' perspective. I will respond to any questions.

Thomas T Shirai Jr  
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House Committee on Economic, Business & Military Affairs  
Representative Angus L K McKelvey (Chair) / Representative Issac W Choy (Vice Chair)

Notice of Hearing  
Tuesday, February 17, 2009  
8:30AM/State Capitol Conference Room 312

February 15, 2009

RE: Testimony Support for HB 473 (Relating to Kauai Veterans Cemetery)

*Aloha* Chair McKelvey, Vice Chair Choy & Committee Members,

I support HB 473. While serving in the U S Coast Guard, I've had my share of honors including the highest lifesaving medal awarded to active or reserve personnel; Coast Guard Medal ([www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)) I was awarded this in 1984. Throughout the history of the Coast Guard there are only 283 recipients of this honor out of the millions who have serve in this branch of service.

I understand that it's a responsibility to care for those who've served our armed services however I'd like to note that not all veterans are buried at designated cemeteries for veterans such as this cemetery and at the *National Memorial of the Pacific (Punchbowl aka Puu O Waina)*. They were buried at other cemeteries. Here in *Waialua District*, they were buried in places that included *Liliuokalani Protestant Church Cemetery* and *Puuiki Cemetery*.

The *Department of Accounting Services (DAGS)* is responsible for the upkeep of (4) four cemeteries which includes *Puea Cemetery* in *Kapalama* where in 2003 there was a community cleanup of that cemetery was organized by Senator Suzanne Chun-Oakland and the Legislators of that area. She also introduced *SB 1066 (Relating to Puea Cemetery)* for monies to upkeep the public portion and was primarily for a chainlink fence protecting it from vandalism however it was deffered in 2003 and 2004 due to lack of funding. Another cemetery under *DAGS* was featured in the media for recognition of veterans buried there is *Kalae Pohaku Cemetery aka Puukamalii Cemetery*.

I'd like to see funding for the upkeep of other cemeteries as well like the ones mentioned because they are also apart of our unique heritage and culture.

Lastly as a past member of the *Oahu Island Burial Council (OIBC)* I feel that HB 473 is in the tradition of *Malama Iwi Kupuna* even though it's priority is for *Ancient Hawaiian Ancestors*. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony supporting HB 473. *Malama Iwi Kupuna*.

*Thomas T Shirai Jr*  
*Mokule'ia, Waialua*



Volunteers, from left, Sherwood Gould, Darryn Ng and Thomas Shirai have rallied community members to clean up Paea Cemetery at the intersection of North School Street and Kapalama Avenue.

Eugene Tanner • The Honolulu Advertiser



SA Thomas T. Shirai of Station Sheboygan, Wis. receives the Coast Guard Medal from Elizabeth H. Dole, Secretary of Transportation, for his rescue of a woman from near-freezing water last February. The medal was presented Sept. 12, at the annual Department of Transportation awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

EST 1986

# North Shore cemetery survives time and erosion only to endure vandalism

By Jayson Horper

**F**OR SEVERAL years Thomas Shirai Jr. has been going to Pu'uiki Cemetery in Waialua to clear

weeds and debris off the graves of family members. However, in recent months Pu'uiki cemetery and the graves sites of his family members have come under attack.

The attack has not come from weather erosion or age, but from vandals. On Sat., Jan. 25, Shirai was tending the graves of his great uncle when he heard the sound of male voices.

Shirai followed one of the boys to the edge of the cemetery and found several tombstones had been pushed over and cracked. One tombstone in the shape of a cross had been pulled out of the ground and struck several times with a blunt object.

"That one really got to me," said

Shirai. "Maybe because that grave was right next to that of my great grand uncle."

Over the past couple of months Shirai has noticed other vandalized

Shore in an effort to remind the community that the cemetery is still there and needs their kōkua. Shirai has testified to the North Shore Neighborhood Board and has enlisted the help of sev-

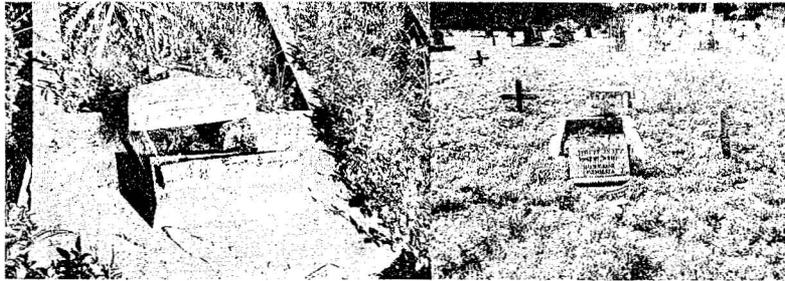
caught desecrating a burial site faces a misdemeanor charge and, if convicted, a minimum sentence of one year in jail and a \$2000 fine.

Pu'uiki cemetery was established on a sugar cane plantation. Nanette Purnell, director of the Cemetery Research Project, said the cemetery has valuable information helpful in establishing genealogies, and it reflects the historical ethnic makeup of the community.

Plantation cemeteries such as Pu'uiki were never purchased or run by an association like other cemeteries. The people who lived and worked on the plantations cared for them.

"If people have relatives here, they should check the graveyard out," said Shirai. "I just don't want anything worse to happen, and I hope people open their eyes."

Those interested in taking part in a cemetery clean-up can contact Shirai at 808-623-6929.



Several gravesites at Pu'uiki Cemetery in Waialua have been vandalized in recent months. Tombstones have been pushed over and in some cases struck with hammers.

gravesites, and has taken pictures of teenage boys actually vandalizing the graves. Armed with this information, he contacted the police and filed a report. However no arrests have been made.

Since the vandalism occurred, Shirai has started a crusade on the North

Shore in an effort to remind the community that the cemetery is still there and needs their kōkua. Shirai has testified to the North Shore Neighborhood Board and has enlisted the help of sev-

PHOTOS: THOMAS SHIRAI JR.