



Governor John A. Burns

Public Service, Politics and John Burns

Many of the men of the 100th dedicated themselves to public service, living up to the club's motto – "For Continuing Service."

The first Club 100 member who rose to public office was Sakae Takahashi, elected in 1950 as a member of the Board of Supervisors, City and County of Honolulu. Governor Oren E. Long later appointed the 100th veteran to the post of Treasurer, Territory of Hawaii. Takahashi ran again for public office at the territorial level (and later at the state level) and was elected to the Senate, where he served for 20 years. Upon his return to private life, Takahashi became one of the founders of Central Pacific Bank, eventually rising to chairman of CPB, Inc., a holding company of Central Pacific Bank. He retired from that position in 1990.

The illustrious political career of the 100th's Spark Matsunaga started with his 1954 election to the Territorial House of Representatives. After Hawaii's people re-elected Matsunaga to three consecutive terms, Matsunaga ran for the U.S. House of Representatives where he served for seven terms. Matsunaga was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1976, where he represented Hawaii until his death in April 1990. It would take a book to list Matsunaga's numerous contributions in the political and community arenas. Suffice to say, however, that Matsunaga pursued peace, having experienced the horrors of war. He will long be remembered as the "Peace Senator."

The list of 100th veterans who dedicated themselves to public service is long: Robert Taira and Howard Miyake worked for many years in the State Legislature – in the Senate and House of Representatives, respectively. Yasutaka Fukushima served in both houses before his appointment to the bench of the Circuit Court. Jack Mizuha also provided Hawaii with distinguished service in the State Supreme

Court, but his claim to notoriety began on December 7, 1941, when a Japanese pilot from the Pearl Harbor attack force landed his crippled plane on the island of Niihau. Jack, then a lieutenant with M Co., 299th Infantry, Hawaii National Guard, stationed at Kauai's west end, volunteered to lead a squad of sharpshooting enlisted men to Niihau to capture the aviator. Before he reached the spot, the Hawaiians of Niihau had killed the pilot by bashing his head with a stone, so Jack was reduced to conducting a hearing with the natives and writing a report on the affair.

Kenneth Saruwatari, Ben Takayesu and Kenneth Harada were district court judges for many years. Albert Oki, the first NSO to serve Hawaii's disabled veterans, also became the first AJA to rise to the position of administrative law judge. Major General Francis Takemoto was a State of Hawaii adjutant general. Brigadier General Eddie Yoshimasu led the Hawaii National Guard for many years. Toshimi Sodetani worked as deputy attorney general in the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and sat on the bench as circuit court judge. Takashi Kitaoka, a deputy prosecutor for the City and County of Honolulu for 11 years, became director of the state's Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, was appointed a circuit court judge on Maui and capped his distinctive career as director of the state's Criminal Justice Data Center. As county attorney and later a circuit court judge, Toshio Kabutan worked on behalf of the people of Kauai.

The 100th's legacy was felt even in faraway Montana, where Larry Miyasato sat on the bench as a district judge.

John A. Burns paved the way for AJAs to enter politics in the postwar era. He encouraged the AJAs to get involved in politics as an avenue toward first class citizenship. This encouragement was a typical Burns trademark that could be seen in the days fol-





Adversity Overcome
They faced extraordinary challenges with great spirit & vision
L-R, standing: the 442nd's U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye, the 100th's
U.S. Representative Spike Matsunaga & seated, Dr. Kenneth Otagaki

lowing December 7, 1941. He was instrumental in securing the release of island Japanese who were routinely rounded up by the FBI. The FBI had called upon Burns to serve on a committee of three and screen the "suspects."

Burns not only inspired; he acted upon his beliefs. During the time he was Hawaii's governor, from 1962-74, Burns appointed the following 100th veterans to his cabinet: Dr. Kenneth Otagaki (a University of Hawaii professor), Director of the Department of Agriculture; Kenneth Saruwatari, Deputy Attorney General; Mike Tokunaga, Deputy Director, Department of Regulatory Agencies and the Department of Accounting and General Services; Dr. Katsumi Kometani, Chairman, Board of Education.

The 100th can be proud that its members are living up to the club's motto - "For Continuing Service."

Mike Tokunaga

