

Chronological: Veterans of Foreign Wars Congressional Awards Dinner, D.C.

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
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news from

Senator DANIEL K. INOUE

topic: VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CONGRESSIONAL AWARD DINNER

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I have been privileged to serve as a member of Congress for over 27 years. During this period, my amazement at, and respect for, the miracle of democracy has grown with each passing day.

I was in Washington when America elected and inaugurated her first Catholic President, and mourned with my fellow Senators when he met with an untimely death by an assassin's bullet.

The hours which followed the assassination were disquieting ones. Even among United States Senators the questions most often heard were "What now?", "What do we do?", "Where do we go from here?".

But somehow our system worked. A new President was sworn in, the business of this country continued. Notwithstanding the rumors of a conspiracy, our country settled down without martial law, without armed troops in our streets, without a military junta.

This was followed by the Vietnam decade. A decade of alienated youth, of violent demonstrations, of burning draft cards, and the exodus to Canada. Our democracy was sorely tested, but then it once again demonstrated its resiliency and strength.

Our nation cried out to those who left -- "Come home, all is forgiven". And the long process of giving the men and women who had served our nation the gratitude they deserved, began.

I was in Washington when our capital city began to burn. It was a tense moment when it appeared that open racial warfare was a possibility. A great black leader was murdered, and his angered and frustrated followers put to torch New York, Detroit, Washington and other cities. But even while the ashes were still warm, Congress continued its work on the civil rights package. Once again the strength and resiliency of our nation and our people carried us through the dark nights.

Then in 1974 when our President relinquished his office in disgrace and left our Nation's capital, I was once again awed by the strength of our democracy. There were no tanks on our streets, no armed divisions of men. The resignation, and the inauguration of a new President were carried out in an almost "business as usual" manner. Men and women reported for work on schedule in the morning and left their offices in the afternoon in the Washington traffic jam.

In recent days, headlines throughout this land have once again employed the words that were common place a few years ago -- "cover up", "scandal", "what did he know?"

Throughout these recent traumatic years, in fact through the stress and strains of more than 200 years, our nation has persevered. What is the secret of all this? Is it the Constitution?

Many political scientists would respond in the affirmative. But yet, other countries have similar Constitutions. In fact, the Constitution of the Soviet Union is a beautiful document. It speaks of rights and privileges similar to that of ours.

A wise scholar--Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes--once wrote:

"You may think that the Constitution is your security--it is nothing but a piece of paper. You may think that the statutes are your security--they are nothing but words in a book. You may think that the elaborate mechanism of government is your security--it is nothing at all, unless you have a sound and uncorrupted public opinion to give life to your Constitution, to give vitality to your statutes, to make efficient your government machinery."

This year we observe the Bicentennial of our Constitution, but our Constitution like similar documents throughout the world is as described by Chief Justice Hughes, "it is nothing but a piece of paper" -- "unless you...give life to your Constitution."

I really do not know the entire answer to the source of our strength, but I am certain that it lies in the hearts of the conglomeration of people we call Americans.

We Americans can be justly proud of ourselves and our country because throughout these 200 years, we have given life to our Constitution. Ours is a living Constitution. The process to giving life to our Constitution has never been easy.

We have witnessed the tragedy of a Civil War, where father battled son and neighbor killed neighbor. We have witnessed great and heated debates in our Congress. We have witnessed bloody demonstrations. But, in each case, the people prevailed and our Constitution was made stronger.

I am proud to live in a land which freely gives us the opportunity to speak out and criticize the government. The author of our Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson once said: "The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be exercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all."

I am proud to live in a land which does not burn books, but, instead permits us to read all books, even if the prose be ugly, vile and profane.

I am proud to live in a land which provides free public education to all those with the capacity and ability to learn.

I am proud to live in a land in which, for the first time in history, over one-half of our young people are going on to higher education.

I am proud to live in a land which is trying not to forsake its elder citizens and provides them with medical and hospital care in their autumn years.

I am proud to live in a land which is trying its best to eradicate from its midst, poverty and hunger and the age-old curse of bigotry and discrimination.

The pace may be slow -- but we are stepping forward to our goals.

I am proud to live in a land where the people are free to elect representatives to serve them in their councils of government.

I am proud to live in a land where every person, including the criminal, has his rights protected in the courts -- where the phrase "due process of law" is a meaningful and living phrase.

I am proud to live in a land where one may pray as he chooses to his God or Gods, or not worship at all.

I am proud to live in a land where the promise of success and advancement is real.

And I am proud to live in a land which has produced men and women like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Helen Keller, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King.

And as we face the very difficult challenges that lie ahead, it is important to remember that resiliency has always been a part of the American character. I believe it still is. Americans have always bounced back when beset by adversity -- in business, in space exploration, in art, in politics, and in personal relationships. It is time we commit our skills, our intelligence, our determination and our resiliency to curing the ills we have spent the past dozen years in diagnosing. This job is as much yours as it is mine. With confidence born and nurtured by knowledge and truth, and with the courage of free men and women, I believe we shall prevail.

March 3, 1987
Veterans of Foreign Wars, Congressional
Awards Dinner, Sheraton Washington

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CONGRESSIONAL AWARDS DINNER
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 3, 1987

I HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO SERVE AS A MEMBER
OF CONGRESS FOR OVER 27 YEARS. DURING THIS PERIOD, MY
AMAZEMENT AT, AND RESPECT FOR, THE MIRACLE OF
DEMOCRACY HAS GROWN WITH EACH PASSING DAY.

I WAS IN WASHINGTON WHEN AMERICA ELECTED
AND INAUGURATED HER FIRST CATHOLIC PRESIDENT, AND
MOURNED WITH MY FELLOW SENATORS WHEN HE MET WITH AN
UNTIMELY DEATH BY AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET.

THE HOURS WHICH FOLLOWED THE ASSASSINATION WERE DISQUIETING ONES. EVEN AMONG UNITED STATES SENATORS THE QUESTIONS MOST OFTEN HEARD WERE "WHAT NOW?", "WHAT DO WE DO?", "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?".

BUT SOMEHOW OUR SYSTEM WORKED. A NEW PRESIDENT WAS SWORN IN, THE BUSINESS OF THIS COUNTRY CONTINUED. NOTWITHSTANDING THE RUMORS OF A CONSPIRACY, OUR COUNTRY SETTLED DOWN WITHOUT MARTIAL LAW, WITHOUT ARMED TROOPS IN OUR STREETS, WITHOUT A MILITARY JUNTA.

THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY THE VIETNAM DECADE. A DECADE OF ALIENATED YOUTH, OF VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS, OF BURNING DRAFT CARDS, AND THE EXODUS TO CANADA. OUR DEMOCRACY WAS SORELY TESTED, BUT THEN IT ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED ITS RESILIENCY AND STRENGTH.

OUR NATION CRIED OUT TO THOSE WHO LEFT --
"COME HOME," ~~ALL TOGETHER~~". AND THE LONG PROCESS OF
GIVING THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAD SERVED OUR NATION THE
GRATITUDE THEY DESERVED, BEGAN.

I WAS IN WASHINGTON WHEN OUR CAPITAL CITY
BEGAN TO BURN. IT WAS A TENSE MOMENT WHEN IT APPEARED
THAT OPEN RACIAL WARFARE WAS A POSSIBILITY. A GREAT
BLACK LEADER WAS MURDERED, AND HIS ANGERED AND
FRUSTRATED FOLLOWERS PUT TO TORCH NEW YORK, DETROIT,
WASHINGTON AND OTHER CITIES. BUT EVEN WHILE THE ASHES
WERE STILL WARM, CONGRESS CONTINUED ITS WORK ON THE
CIVIL RIGHTS PACKAGE. ONCE AGAIN THE STRENGTH AND
RESILIENCY OF OUR NATION AND OUR PEOPLE CARRIED US
THROUGH THE DARK NIGHTS.

THEN IN 1974 WHEN OUR PRESIDENT RELINQUISHED HIS OFFICE IN DISGRACE AND LEFT OUR NATION'S CAPITAL, I WAS ONCE AGAIN AWED BY THE STRENGTH OF OUR DEMOCRACY. THERE WERE NO TANKS ON OUR STREETS, NO ARMED DIVISIONS OF MEN. THE RESIGNATION, AND THE INAUGURATION OF A NEW PRESIDENT WERE CARRIED OUT IN AN ALMOST "BUSINESS AS USUAL" MANNER. MEN AND WOMEN REPORTED FOR WORK ON SCHEDULE IN THE MORNING AND LEFT THEIR OFFICES IN THE AFTERNOON IN THE WASHINGTON TRAFFIC JAM.

IN RECENT DAYS, HEADLINES THROUGHOUT THIS LAND HAVE ONCE AGAIN EMPLOYED THE WORDS THAT WERE COMMON PLACE A FEW YEARS AGO -- "COVER UP", "SCANDAL", ~~"WHAT DID HE KNOW?"~~

THROUGHOUT THESE RECENT TRAUMATIC YEARS, IN FACT THROUGH THE STRESS AND STRAINS OF MORE THAN 200 YEARS, OUR NATION HAS PERSEVERED. WHAT IS THE SECRET OF ALL THIS? IS IT THE CONSTITUTION?

MANY POLITICAL SCIENTISTS WOULD RESPOND IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. BUT YET, OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE SIMILAR CONSTITUTIONS. IN FACT, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION IS A BEAUTIFUL DOCUMENT. IT SPEAKS OF RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES SIMILAR TO THAT OF OURS.

A WISE SCHOLAR--CHIEF JUSTICE CHARLES EVANS
HUGHES--ONCE WROTE:

"YOU MAY THINK THAT THE CONSTITUTION IS
YOUR SECURITY--IT IS NOTHING BUT A PIECE OF PAPER.
YOU MAY THINK THAT THE STATUTES ARE YOUR SECURITY--
THEY ARE NOTHING BUT WORDS IN A BOOK. YOU MAY THINK
THAT THE ELABORATE MECHANISM OF GOVERNMENT IS YOUR
SECURITY--IT IS NOTHING AT ALL, UNLESS YOU HAVE A
SOUND AND UNCORRUPTED PUBLIC OPINION TO GIVE LIFE TO
YOUR CONSTITUTION, TO GIVE VITALITY TO YOUR STATUTES,
TO MAKE EFFICIENT YOUR GOVERNMENT MACHINERY."

THIS YEAR WE OBSERVE THE BICENTENNIAL OF OUR CONSTITUTION; BUT OUR CONSTITUTION LIKE SIMILAR DOCUMENTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD IS AS DESCRIBED BY CHIEF JUSTICE HUGHES; "IT IS NOTHING BUT A PIECE OF PAPER" -- "UNLESS YOU...GIVE LIFE TO YOUR CONSTITUTION."

I REALLY DO NOT KNOW THE ENTIRE ANSWER TO THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH, BUT I AM CERTAIN THAT IT LIES IN THE HEARTS OF THE CONGLOMERATION OF PEOPLE WE CALL AMERICANS.

WE AMERICANS CAN BE JUSTLY PROUD OF
OURSELVES AND OUR COUNTRY BECAUSE THROUGHOUT THESE 200
YEARS, WE HAVE GIVEN LIFE TO OUR CONSTITUTION. OURS
IS A LIVING CONSTITUTION. ^{BUT,} THE PROCESS TO GIVING LIFE
TO OUR CONSTITUTION HAS NEVER BEEN EASY. *ONE.*

WE HAVE WITNESSED THE TRAGEDY OF A CIVIL
WAR, WHERE FATHER BATTLED SON AND NEIGHBOR KILLED
NEIGHBOR. WE HAVE WITNESSED GREAT AND HEATED DEBATES
IN OUR CONGRESS. WE HAVE WITNESSED BLOODY
DEMONSTRATIONS. BUT, IN EACH CASE, THE PEOPLE
PREVAILED AND OUR CONSTITUTION WAS MADE STRONGER.

*and many have given
their souls in many ways,*

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHICH FREELY GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OUT AND CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT. THE AUTHOR OF OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THOMAS JEFFERSON ONCE SAID: "THE SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE TO GOVERNMENT IS SO VALUABLE ON CERTAIN OCCASIONS THAT I WISH IT TO BE ALWAYS KEPT ALIVE. IT WILL OFTEN BE EXERCISED WHEN WRONG, BUT BETTER SO THAN NOT TO BE EXERCISED AT ALL."

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHICH DOES NOT BURN BOOKS, BUT, INSTEAD PERMITS US TO READ ALL BOOKS, EVEN IF THE PROSE BE UGLY, VILE AND PROFANE.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHICH PROVIDES FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION TO ALL THOSE WITH THE CAPACITY AND ABILITY TO LEARN.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND IN WHICH, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, OVER ONE-HALF OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GOING ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHICH IS TRYING NOT TO FORSAKE ITS ELDER CITIZENS AND PROVIDES THEM WITH MEDICAL AND HOSPITAL CARE IN THEIR AUTUMN YEARS.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHICH IS TRYING ITS BEST TO ERADICATE FROM ITS MIDST, POVERTY AND HUNGER AND THE AGE-OLD CURSE OF BIGOTRY AND DISCRIMINATION.

THE PACE MAY BE SLOW -- BUT WE ARE STEPPING FORWARD TO OUR GOALS.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHERE THE
PEOPLE ARE FREE TO ELECT REPRESENTATIVES TO SERVE THEM
IN THEIR COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHERE EVERY
PERSON, INCLUDING THE CRIMINAL, HAS HIS RIGHTS
PROTECTED IN THE COURTS -- WHERE THE PHRASE "DUE
PROCESS OF LAW" IS A MEANINGFUL AND LIVING PHRASE.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHERE ONE MAY
PRAY AS HE CHOOSES TO HIS GOD OR GODS, OR NOT WORSHIP
AT ALL.

I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHERE THE
PROMISE OF SUCCESS AND ADVANCEMENT IS REAL.

AND I AM PROUD TO LIVE IN A LAND WHICH HAS PRODUCED MEN AND WOMEN LIKE THOMAS JEFFERSON, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, SUSAN B. ANTHONY, OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, HELEN KELLER; JOHN F. KENNEDY, AND MARTIN LUTHER KING.

AND AS WE FACE THE VERY DIFFICULT CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT RESILIENCY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PART OF THE AMERICAN CHARACTER. I BELIEVE IT STILL IS.

AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS BOUNCED BACK WHEN BESET BY
ADVERSITY -- IN BUSINESS; IN SPACE EXPLORATION, IN
ART, IN POLITICS; AND IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. IT
IS TIME WE COMMIT OUR SKILLS, OUR INTELLIGENCE, OUR
DETERMINATION AND OUR RESILIENCY TO CURING THE ILLS WE
HAVE SPENT THE PAST DOZEN YEARS IN DIAGNOSING. THIS
JOB IS AS MUCH YOURS AS IT IS MINE. WITH CONFIDENCE
BORN AND NURTURED BY KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH, AND WITH THE
COURAGE OF FREE MEN AND WOMEN, I BELIEVE WE SHALL
PREVAIL.



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NEWS *Release*

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Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002



"THE VOICE OF TWO AND ONE HALF MILLION MEN AND WOMEN OF THE VFW AND ITS AUXILIARY"

FOR RELEASE:

January 6, 1987

SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
SELECTED FOR VFW CONGRESSIONAL AWARD

U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii was named today to receive the 24th annual Congressional Award of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. for "Outstanding Service to the Nation." The award will be presented on March 3, during the VFW's annual Washington Conference.

In announcing the selection, the National Commander-in-Chief of the two-million-member veterans organization, Norman G. Staab of Russell, Kansas, cited Senator Inouye's 27 years of distinguished public service as a Senator and Congressman.

"Senator Inouye's assured professionalism and unquestioned integrity have been the hallmarks of his service in the Congress," said Staab.

Senator Inouye, named in December to chair the special Senate Committee investigating the Iran-Contra foreign policy crisis, gained prominence in 1973 as a keen and persistent inquisitor while a member of the Senate Watergate Committee.

Staab said, "as a legislator and veteran, his accomplishments and deeds reflect the unstinting dedication of one who places service to his country before self."

(OVER)

Senator Inouye is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Rules and Administration Committee and is chairman of the Select Committee on Indian Affairs. In 1976, he was appointed the first chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, a post he voluntarily relinquished after a two-year term. He served as a member of the committee for eight years, through 1984.

An Army veteran of World War II, Mr. Inouye served in the famed-442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all-Japanese-American unit and one of the most highly decorated units in World War II.

Mr. Inouye was severely wounded in Italy and spent 20 months in Army hospitals after losing his right arm. Discharged as a Captain, he received the Distinguished Service Cross (the second highest award for military valor), Bronze Star, Purple Heart with cluster and 12 other medals and citations.

The first VFW Congressional Award was presented in 1964, to the late Senator Carl Hayden of Arizona. It is awarded alternately to members of the Senate and House of Representatives annually. In 1986, Congresswoman Lindy (Mrs. Hale) Boggs of Louisiana received the award.

The presentation will be made at the 38th annual VFW Congressional Dinner to be held at the Sheraton Washington Hotel in Washington, DC., on March 3, 1987. The award includes a \$1,000 scholarship to be presented by Mr. Inouye to a college or university of his choice.

The Congressional Dinner is the final event of the VFW's annual Washington Conference of its national officers, state commanders and national committee members. During the conference the VFW's priority legislative and national security goals are presented to Congress.