

# Punchbowl walking tour program

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers

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U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka  
Punchbowl Walking Tour Program  
National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific  
April 8, 1994

Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_ for those gracious words.

Everyone, Aloha! This is a glorious, glorious day! This is a day when it seems as though all the elements are in joyful consonance. This is a day when you can virtually feel the spiritual harmony flowing about you. This is such a day because, in fact, we are here to celebrate the culmination of one of the most inspiring examples of cooperative effort I have ever had the privilege of being associated with.

This is a tale of caring collaboration. Patriotism partnered with pragmatism. Veneration accommodating visitors. Tourism honoring tranquility.

It began simply enough, with the sincere proposition that this was a truly special place for people to come to. It became perplexingly complicated, with the troubled concern that this had been transformed in a place that was so popular, no one wanted to come here anymore -- worse, that perhaps they might not even be allowed anymore.

My personal distress over the dilemma was profound, but my part in initiating the search for a solution was easy...seems practically nondescript, when you look back to September 26, 1990 and read what started this all:

Committee Report -- Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill. The Committee is concerned that tour operator traffic at the National Cemetery of the Pacific may adversely affect the spiritual values of the facility, as well as place a strain on cemetery resources, and directs VA to engage in a dialog with tour operators, the Hawaii Visitors Bureau, veterans service organizations, and other relevant parties to develop a fair and efficient tour operator user plan for the cemetery.

Hardly the kind of stuff that brings tears to your eyes and makes you want to stand up and salute, is it?

No, I just made the plea official. You folks took up the call and brought it all to commendable reality. Gene Castagnetti and the VA, (go on to name all the critical people and/or organizations)...  
I salute you.

I acted out of fear that, if we did not get together, we could wind up forever apart. We had to agree on what we could give, because there was so much of value worth keeping. We faced

the always-daunting task of finding a way for everybody to win, but the only alternative was that everybody would lose.

Yes, this is a glorious, glorious day indeed! You have achieved something of which you can be forever proud: You have assured the goodwill and respectful reverence of those who wish to pay sincere tribute to the veterans and their families whose lasting resting place is this hallowed ground. And you have preserved the solemnity and dignity of this consecrated memorial for those who served our nation and the loved ones who honor their memories.

Thank you all for a labor of love marvelously accomplished. God bless you!

**U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka  
Punchbowl Walking Tour Program  
National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific  
April 8, 1994**

**Thank you, Gail Ann (Chew) for those gracious words.**

**Everyone, Aloha! Today, we are here to celebrate the culmination of one of the most inspiring examples of cooperative effort and volunteerism that I have ever had the privilege of being associated with.**

**This is a tale of caring collaboration. Patriotism partnered with pragmatism. Veneration accommodating visitors. Visitors respecting the tranquility and peace of this national shrine.**

**It began simply enough, with the sincere proposition that this is a truly special place for people to come to. But then it became perplexingly complicated, with concern that this had been transformed into a place that was so popular that perhaps no one should be allowed to visit here anymore in order to preserve its tranquility and sanctity.**

I was troubled over this dilemma as many other people were, but my part in initiating a search for a solution was easy. When you look back to September 26, 1990 and read what started this all:

"The Committee is concerned that tour operator traffic at the National Cemetery of the Pacific may adversely affect the spiritual values of the facility, as well as place a strain on cemetery resources, and directs VA to engage in a dialog with tour operators, the Hawaii Visitors Bureau, veterans service organizations, and other relevant parties to develop a fair and efficient tour operator user plan for the cemetery."

That was a provision I included in the committee report to accompany the FY 91 Appropriations Bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Those were not marching orders but words to provide direction; words which I placed into legislation to urge the various groups represented here today to come together and work to help find a common

**solution.**

**I made the plea official. You folks took up the call and brought it all to a commendable reality. Gene Castagnetti and the VA, Mufi Hannemann and his Tourism Office staff, Councilman Arnold Morgado, Gail Chew of the Hawaii Visitors Bureau, Garrett Sakakida and the members of the Hawaii Transportation Association, Hiromu Nojima and members of the Japan Travel Association, Larry Lee of the Office of Veterans Services, Major Robert Au of the Honolulu Police Department, our veterans Al Los Banos, Duke Akina, Don Howell, and Henry Lamb, Bob Freitas and other representatives of the Papakolea and Makiki communities...I salute each of you.**

**Over a period of two years, this group met faithfully to hammer out a collection of solutions. Together, they have devised and implemented an innovative plan to restore tranquility and maintain the solemn and respectful nature of this national memorial cemetery and historic landmark.**

On my part, I acted out of deep concern that, if we did not get together, we could wind up forever apart. We had to agree on what we could give, because there was so much of value worth keeping. We faced the always-daunting task of finding a way for everybody to win, knowing that an alternative was that everybody would lose.

Yes, this is a glorious day! You have achieved something of which you can take pride: You have assured the goodwill and respectful reverence of those who wish to pay sincere tribute to the veterans and their families whose last resting place is this hallowed ground. And you have preserved the solemn dignity of this memorial for those who served our nation and the loved ones who honor their memories.

Thank you all for a labor of love marvelously accomplished. God bless you!