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Lanai exhibition honors war dead

Class of 1956 spearheads display at culture and heritage center

By LEE IMADA, News Editor

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LANAI CITY - An exhibition honoring the 15 Lanai residents killed in action in conflicts from World War II through the Iraq war will open Saturday at 1 p.m. at the Lana'i Culture & Heritage Center.

The display of photos, a DVD presentation and narratives on the 15 casualties of war was put together by the Lanai High School Class of 1956 and remains a work in progress.

Photos of three of the men - Pvt. Saul S. Dias from WWII, and Sgt. Yeikichi Itokazu and Pfc. Kiyomitsu Kutsunai from the Korean War - could not be located. In addition, more information is needed for Vietnam War casualty Lance Cpl. Narciso Bertomen Jr., a news release about the display said.

The idea for the exhibition started when the Class of '56 began compiling a booklet that included class members and their remembrances of Lanai. The name of Staff Sgt. Dalmacio P. Pascua Jr., who was killed in the Vietnam War, came up when the section on deceased classmates was being assembled.

"He really started it," said class member Betty Itakura in a phone interview from Orange County, Calif., on Monday.

In the booklet published in 2004 are photos of Pascua and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, on which his name is etched. A booklet caption said their classmate "represents all those from Lanai who gallantly gave their lives while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces."

When the class celebrated its 50-year reunion in 2006, a section of the class

Fact Box

LANA'I HEROES

These Lanai men gave their lives for their country in war:

WORLD WAR II

*Saul S. Dias
Shosei Kutaka
Choyei Oshiro
Wallace H. Oshiro
Nobuaki Tomita*

KOREAN WAR

*Rufino Garalde
Yeikichi B. Itokazu
Kiyomitsu Kutsunai
Donald S. Miyajima*

VIETNAM WAR

*Narciso Bertomen Jr.
Dalmacio P. Pascua Jr.
Joseph Sarocam
Gilbert B. Suetos
Leonard M. Tadios*

IRAQ

Blake A. Magaoay

commemorative DVD was dedicated to the 14 (at the time) soldiers who gave their lives for their country. Pascua was its "inspiration," said Itakura.

"It was so well received by the class, we thought it might be good to give to the Lanai museum," she said.

Kepa Maly, executive director of the center, noted that Lanai is a small and close community. The lives of the 39 graduates of the Class of '56 are intertwined with many others on the island.

"Our small community is very tight, and we've known the history," said Maly.

Class members have been working with the center's executive director for the last two years to produce the exhibit at the center.

The names of the war dead were taken from a stone memorial in Dole Park and spanned World War II and the Korean, Vietnam and Iraq wars, said Itakura.

There were no deaths from World War I because it was fought before the existence of a large community on Lanai, said Maly. The Great War raged from 1914 to 1918 in Europe. Construction on Lanai City didn't start until 1923, a year after Dole bought the island.

Gathering information on the men killed in war has been trying at times because families of many of the soldiers have left Lanai, Itakura and Maly said. They were collecting information, such as when the men were born, enlisted and killed in action and where they are interred.

"It was pretty difficult" contacting families and friends of these members of the armed forces, said Itakura. "We had to do a lot of calling. Most had to be called off Lanai and on the Mainland, pretty much all over."

After all their phone calls, class members still were unable to obtain photos for Dias, Kutsunai and Itokazu and lack full biographical information on Bertomen.

Anyone with information, photos or articles on any of the Lanai men who died in war may contact Itakura at (714) 827-7465 or e-mail b.itaku ra@gmail.com, Margaret Platt at e-mail msoplatt@msn.com or Tony Magaoay at Maga oayJT@ldschurch.org. The exhibit will be up for about six months, said Maly. The schedule for the center, which opened in October 2007, is 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays. It is located in the old Dole Administration Building.

The center is a nonprofit partnership of Castle & Cooke Resorts, the Lanai Archaeological Committee and 'Ahahui 'Imi Pono O Lana'i, its Web site said.

The center collects, documents and shares the history of Lanai with residents and

visitors. The center includes Hawaiian archeological artifacts, plantation-era documents and family memorabilia.

For more information about the center, call (808) 565-7177 or e-mail kepa@LanaiCHC.org.

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