

life ON THE RIDGE

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CELEBRATING THE VETERANS IN OUR COMMUNITY
AIR FORCE HONOR GUARD



Public Health School Graduation

Honoring America's Heroes This VETERANS DAY

By Kelly Valencia-Aiken, Hawaii Loa Ridge resident

Veterans Day, formerly known as Armistice Day, was a U.S. holiday to honor the conclusion of World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” – which officially ended at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. The fighting, however, had ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, went into effect between the Allied nations and Germany at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month: November 11 of 1918.

Initially, this holiday only acknowledged and honored the veterans of the First World War. In 1954, after World War II and the Korean War, the 83rd U.S. Congress changed the word “Armistice” to “Veterans,” and the holiday now celebrates all former and current active duty military service members. As we acknowledge those who have served our country over the years, we would like to celebrate some of these heroes who live on Hawaii Loa Ridge: Thomas Driskill, Chuck Miller, Stephanie Marshall, and Robert Valencia-Aiken.

Thomas Driskill served for twenty-nine years in the United States Army, retiring as a Colonel in the Medical Service Corps. His time in the service included overseas tours of duty in Vietnam with the Military Advisory Command Vietnam (MACV) 72-73, one tour of duty in the Federal Republic of Germany with the 2d General Hospital, Landstuhl 69-70, and the 1st Armored Division, Goppingen/Ansbach 70-72, one tour of Duty, U.S. Army Hospital Berlin, 87-89 and one tour of duty at Tripler Army Med Cen, Honolulu, HI, 92-95. His mainland tours of duty included San Antonio, Texas X 4, and Washington DC X 4.

Thomas commanded a Medical Battalion for two years, a Medical Brigade for two years, served as Deputy Commander for Administration U.S. Army Hospi-



Selected for Special Assignment and Coined by 4-Star General



Robert with Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Wright at AFSA



General Raymond's Post of Rob being Selected for Special Assignment and Coined by 4-Star General



Chuck and Stephanie



Chuck in Vietnam War

tal Berlin. He was the Chief of Staff/Deputy Commander at Tripler Army Med Cen and for the Pacific Regional Medical Command. He was the Chief of Staff/Deputy Commander and Acting, awarded the Commander Walter Reed Army Med Cen and North Atlantic Regional Medical Command, and as the Executive Officer to the U.S. Army Surgeon General.

Upon retirement from the U.S. Army in 1997, Thomas was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM) in addition to three Legion of Merit Medals, eight Meritorious Service Medals,



First Coin from General Raymond, Airmen Coin, and Last Coin from General Raymond



Vietnam Phu Quoc Island Prison Camp



Robert Valencia-Aiken's Awards, Certificates, Coins, and Medals

the Bronze Star Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross, in addition to his selection as the Federal Health Services Administrator of the Year of 1997, for Army, Navy, Air Force, VA, and Public Health Service by the Association of Military Surgeons of U.S. (AMSUS). He was selected Below the Zone for advanced promotion to Major, LT Colonel, and again to Colonel. Thomas was nominated for and completed both the Battalion and Brigade Command, in addition to finishing all of the officer basic, advanced, and special schools, which culminated in his selection for a yearlong sabbatical at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, in Pennsylvania.

As a medic on Military Police Advisory Team 18, MACV, stationed at Phu Quoc Central Prisoner of War Camp on Phu Quoc Island Vietnam, Thomas was one of three officers responsible for repatriating 38,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong POW's back to their homes all over Vietnam. He was on the last plane leaving

Vietnam with military combat forces March 28, 1973. Thomas served as the First Family Escort for President Jimmy Carter's sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, during the 1977 Inauguration. He served as the Second Family Escort for Vice President George H. W. Bush's mother during the 1981 Inauguration, and as the Senior Escort for Vice President and Mrs. George H. W. Bush during the 1985 Inauguration. Through these escort duties, which each lasted approximately one month, he had the opportunity to meet and to become acquainted with the following: President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Carter, President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Reagan, Vice President (later President) George H. W. Bush and Second (later First) Lady Bush, plus a host of celebrities who attended the various gala Inaugural events. After the 1981 Inauguration, the then Vice President George H. W. Bush invited Thomas and his wife, Bonnie, to dine with them at the Vice-Presidential Residence in Washington, D.C., which was very memorable and special. It was an extraordinary experience. Thomas and Bonnie have been blessed with great friends and unique experiences worldwide while serving in the military. They now enjoy their life together here on the Ridge.

Chuck Miller, MD, FACP, and retired Colonel, and Stephanie Marshall, RN, MSN, and retired Colonel, have lived on Hawaii Loa Ridge since 1994. They and their two Italian greyhounds love the neighborhood. Before living on the Ridge, they were stationed in Europe from 1991 to 1994 during the post-Cold War drawdown of American Troops. Stationed in Nuremberg, Germany, at the 98th General Hospital, Chuck was the Commander after it was renamed the 3rd Combat Support Hospital, and deployed medical units to the Bosnian War in Croatia. They went to the Taj Mahal when present for the Asia Pacific Military Medical Meetings (APMMC), which the U.S. Army Pacific Command cohosted with various countries' military medical departments. Some of the countries represented include the Pacific Rim countries of India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, New Zealand, and Australia. Chuck and Stephanie were involved yearly for 10 years with the scientific programs, which was an incredible adventure. They still have many friends in several of those countries with whom they stay connected, and they enjoy their time with their friends on Hawaii Loa Ridge.

Robert Valencia-Aiken moved to Hawaii Loa Ridge with his family in August of 2018. Currently an active-duty Staff Sergeant for the United States Air Force, he has been an enlisted member of the service since March of 2014. He completed his technical



Airman of the Year Awards

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training as a Public Health Apprentice at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio, in August 2014, where he was the class leader and the chapel leader. He became a Public Health Technician for the 21st Aerospace Medicine Squadron at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In this position, he was a technician for AFSPC's most extensive Occupational Health program.

In the fall of 2014, he was invited to speak at the Storytellers event at Peterson Air Force Base, where he shared his journey of being born in Bogota, Colombia, growing up in Sterling Heights, MI, and later moving to Honolulu, HI. Here, he was given his first coin by then three-star General John William Raymond. Shortly after the Storytellers event, he received his Chaplain credentials in 2015 through the International Association of Chaplains.

In January of 2016, Robert was chosen to be the President of the Junior Enlisted Association. In March of 2016, he was awarded Below the Zone for advanced promotion six months early. He won Airman of the Year at the Squadron level, then at the Group level for the year prior. He won for Team Pete, which was comprised of Peterson AFB, Cheyenne Mt. AFB, and Schriever AFB. He was chosen as the AFMS Public Health Technician of the year for 2016 while being awarded the Airman of the Year Award at the 14th AF-NAF level as A1C for the year of 2015.

In November, he was chosen to become an Honor Guardsman and won the Bearing Award. He became the lead trainer of the 21st Space Wing Base Honor Guard team, and he was responsible for the training of a team comprised of twelve Enlisted Airmen and one Officer. He was then awarded the Air Force Achievement Medal for his Honor Guard service and Airman of the Quarter for the Squadron and Group levels.

In January of 2017, Robert won the Honor Guard Airman of the Year for 2016. On May 9 of 2017, Robert was surprised with an unexpected promotion: He was STEP promoted to Staff Sergeant the day before he was scheduled to take his Staff Sergeant test. In June, he graduated from Airman Leadership School with the Commandant Award. In July, he was picked to represent the



Airman of the Year Awards



Robert at Storytellers



Vietnam Saigon War Museum
Screenshot of U.S. Soldiers
Getting on Last Plane



Tripler Admin Support Staff 1995



Rob with the Green Class Leader Cord at Tech School



Robert was Step-Promoted to Staff Sergeant



Robert was chosen for SLECP-A

Peterson Air Force Base at the Air Force Sergeant Association meeting in Rio Nevada on an all-expenses-paid week-long trip. In August of 2017, Robert submitted his application for SLECP-A, a scholarship award program to get a degree and commission as an officer in the United States Air Force.

After being coined over 21 times by various high-ranking officers and receiving multiple awards and recognition for his exemplary service, Robert was honored again. In December of 2017, he was selected by the now four-star General Raymond for the SLECP-A scholarship, and he was awarded his school-of-choice here at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. Rob, his wife, Kelly, their son, Giovanni, and their daughter, Giulianna, moved back home to Hawaii, where Robert is currently finishing a double major in Business and Communicology, and enjoying life on Hawaii Loa Ridge.