

Interview with Senator Daniel Akaka
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Interviewer: Ronald Sarasin, President, U.S. Capitol Historical
Society

Ronald Sarasin: Welcome to the United States Capitol Historical Society's series of interviews with Asian Pacific American Members of Congress. My name is Ron Sarasin, I'm a Former Member of Congress. I'm from Connecticut and I am the President of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society. Senator Daniel Kahikina Akaka is the first U.S. Senator of native Hawaiian ancestry and currently the only Senator of Chinese American heritage. Senator Akaka was born in Honolulu on September 11, 1924 and served in the United States Army Corps of Engineers in World War Two, including service in Saipan and Tinian. He subsequently earned a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education from the University of Hawaii. Senator Akaka was elected as a Democrat to the United States House of Representatives in 1976 and won seven consecutive elections by wide margins. When Senator Spark Matsunaga died in 1990, Hawaii's governor appointed him to serve temporarily until the next election. Senator Akaka won that election as well as the elections of 1994, 2000, and 2006 by wide margins. Senator Akaka is the Chairman of the Veteran Affairs Committee, the Arms Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Management, the Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Historical Preservation, and Recreation, and the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Government Management and the federal work force in the District of Columbia. Senator Akaka also serves on the Indian Affairs and Banking Committees and chairs the Congressional taskforce on native Hawaiian issues. Raised in a deeply religious family, Senator Akaka is a member of the historic Hawaii Kawaiaha'o Church where he served as choir director for seventeen years. He and his wife Milly are the parents of four sons and a daughter who have blessed them with fourteen grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Senator Akaka, it is a pleasure to have you here this morning and have the opportunity to interview you for our U.S. Capitol Historical Society's ongoing series of oral history interviews with current and former Members of Congress. It's a pleasure to have you here this morning.

Senator Akaka: Ron, Aloha, and I want to tell you that it's really an honor and a pleasure for me to be with you here to chat about the past.

Ron Sarasin: Well that's exactly what we want to do; we want your memory to flow a little bit.

Taking the Oath of Office

Ron Sarasin: In the first interview we did in this series we did with Tom Foley and Bob Michel, we did them together. They both spoke about how moved they were when they first went on the floor of the House of Representatives, raised their right hand, and were sworn in by the Speaker. What was your impression when you first entered the House of Representatives and went on the floor and was sworn in?

Senator Akaka: For me it was awesome, coming from Hawaii, coming from the background I had and knowing that I was in a body of the U.S. House and would be a member of the House following the Prince of Hawaii—Prince Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole who served in the House from 1902 to 1922 and to follow that man of Hawaii, it was awesome. And then also the feeling that I was being sworn into a body that was responsible for the laws of this great land. And for me in Hawaii and I should mention that slowly, we call it chicken skin, means that your whole body feels this awesomeness and the feeling of being so proud to be able to be selected and elected to serve a group of people like the beautiful people of Hawaii, and so that began a new life for me. And so as I look back at that moment, I also—because of my background—I was so grateful and I thank God for that moment and prayed that my service would be well done and well received.

Congressional Mentors

Ron Sarasin: Was there anyone or any group of people that you looked to when you first came into the Congress who helped you along and provided you with some sound advice?

Senator Akaka: There were many in the House that, coming from Hawaii I was of the attitude that I wanted to be friends with as many

people as I could, and especially to what I would consider leaders of the House and so Tom Foley was one of them. Charlie Rangel was another and there were many others including the Speaker of the House at the time. And so I sought their advice and they gave me good advice while I was there; but the friendships that we found were everlasting and they helped me in my work, in the House, and for the people of Hawaii as well as for this great nation of America. And I still remember these friendships and there were others who were mentors of mine who were committee chairmen like—Jamie Whitten was another one and he was very helpful to me of course because I became a member of the Appropriations Committee. And if it's alright let me tell you about the story which involved him. I learned that one of the top committees that you could belong to would be the Appropriations Committee, and so I had in mind that, well I'll try and get to the Appropriations and in talking to my colleagues they sort of smiled at me and sort of told me, hey, forget it, coming from Hawaii, a small state makes it difficult. The other is that you cannot get into the committee unless somebody dies, or somebody resigns or leaves the House. And I looked at the membership and everybody, all the positions were filled and there was no chance, but that was in mind my first term. In my second term I thought about it again and I spoke with more of my colleagues and friends and also with Tip O'Neill and finally one of the members passed away and immediately what I did was I submitted my name. But what I was surprised at was that there were 78 members of the House that submitted their names for that position. And so I pursued it anyway and from advice I went to Speaker O'Neill and chatted with him and the advice that was given to me was 'talk to Tip first and watch his mannerisms and watch what he tells you and whatever he tells you he'll indicate whether you should or should not even think about it.' And so I did, I talked to him and in a chat for me what was important, Tip O'Neill said 'Danny, you got to try hard to get into that committee' and I accepted that and I accepted that as I had a chance. And so the second surprise was that it took six months for them to fill that position and the reason was that they had to meet every week—the steering committee had to meet every week—and eliminate members, and it took six months to do that and Charles Rangel was a member of that committee and Tom Foley was and others and I would talk to them and I was so fortunate that every time they eliminate members my name was in. And I spoke to the Speaker numerous times, well, to make it short after six

months there were two names, and I was one of the two. And so I chose a time when Speaker O'Neill was presiding on the floor and I felt that that was an important time because he hardly did that, others presided, but while he was there I went up to him and said 'Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you very much for helping me out otherwise I wouldn't have come this far.' And I told him 'I just want to point out that all the time I've been here I always supported you.' And he said 'Danny, your right, you've been one of my greatest supporters' I said 'thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.' And I think that made a difference because the next day, Charlie Rangel called me and said 'Danny, you're in' and so then the next step was that we had to take it to the caucus, and that was another job for me to convince my colleagues and of course I prevailed in the caucus and became a member of the Appropriations Committee of the House and was quickly told that you probably will be the first and last person from Hawaii in the House to be a member of the Appropriations Committee. And so I served in the Appropriations Committee until I left fourteen years later to go to the Senate and I hesitated about leaving because I was in line to become Chairman of the Treasury and Postal Services Committee and also of the Agriculture Committee. And so when I decided to accept the Governor's nomination and selection and appointment, two people came and gave me a big hug, one was Steny Hoyer to say thank you, thank you for leaving, and he became Chairman of the Committee on Treasury and Dick Durbin was the other one who came and hugged me because he became Chairman of the Agriculture Committee. But I mention this to indicate the kind of relationship I had developed in the House and I really felt so close to all the members of the House on both sides of the aisle and in those days, you know, your word was golden and a handshake was one of commitment and that's how we operated on both sides of the aisle and I would tell you that my service on the Appropriations Committee was great for Hawaii, for our great nation, but for me it was a huge achievement that I'll treasure and cherish for the rest of my life.

Thoughts on Partisanship in Congress

Ron Sarasin: You raise the issue of the cooperation with the Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, and your experience in the House—the Senate of course is a lot more collegial than the

House is I think, by historically its been a lot more collegial—what difference do you see in the House today from the time you came in 1976 and today, especially in view of the partisanship that seems to exist there?

Senator Akaka: I see a huge difference. I would say that the House is not as collegial as it was during my time. In the House, during those days, we spoke a lot to each other, we made agreements with each other before we took it to the Committee or to the floor. And as I mentioned, our word was really a bond between us and that kept us close. And I would say that my experience even with joint committee meetings with the House, that that doesn't exist anymore. And the difference I feel is that their more personal, in my time there in the House we would use each, if we referred it to somebody else, we referred to that Member as a third person and not personally or referred to them as a person from a particular state or a particular district but not even using their names. So it was a time when we were able to accomplish things just through friendship and through respect, now that's another word I feel is not as prominent as it was while I was there, and respect for others and that I feel is a little sad, we hope that this doesn't get to that degree in the U.S. Senate. There was some of that but the Senate is such a smaller body of people who feel strongly about collegiality and making every effort to try and keep it that way even today in the U.S.

Ron Sarasin: Have you seen any change in the Senate in the seventeen years that you've been there? Has it become more partisan then it was when you first arrived?

Senator Akaka: Yes, I would say that there is that difference. And I think part of it has been because we have been in a time where the executive body and the legislative body has been working very close together, whereas in the past there was more separation between these bodies, and as a result of being Republican led administration and Republican led Senate and House as well, at that period of time there was a tendency of working themselves by themselves so there is this feeling that went on these few years until 2007, this is a change that's coming on now, but there was a difference in attitudes and relationships, but for me over the years, I've always felt that friendships and relationships was so important so I've held that on

both sides of the aisle and I've worked with them and so my style, coming from Hawaii, is not one of attack but rather working together with others to accomplish something.

Heritage

Ron Sarasin: Let me go back to coming from Hawaii, you're the first Senator of native Hawaiian ancestry and currently the only sitting Senator of Chinese American ancestry, how has that affected your thinking or your interaction with colleagues, the kind of legislation you're interested in, has it affected it?

Senator Akaka: No question about that, it has affected what I do, what I've done. I would tell you that coming from the environment of Hawaii and the style of living there, the people. And coming out of Education, and by the way I feel that I wish we had more educators in the Congress, but there's a different perception, a different view and a different way of moving on legislation or even on approaching and thinking about legislation from that kind of background. And I feel that my service here has really been not Dan Akaka but the people of Hawaii and the people of this great country of the United States and that I'll do everything I can to help the people out. And so this kind of service I do here and so my focus is really on what I can accomplish to help people of our country. And that I believe has come from where I come from, I'm smilingly saying that my ethnicity of being Hawaiian of people telling me, oh that brings out your personality and your relationships with people and the Chinese brings out the business in me and that combination works out real well and I would tell you that I think it does and I'm able to accomplish a lot and with my ethnicity and where I come from I still feel a strong drive to do the best I can to help people.

World War II

Ron Sarasin: Like your colleagues, Senator Dan Inouye and Congressman Norm Mineta, both were affected by World War II, as you were as well. Tell us what effect World War II had on your life and especially as it began?

Senator Akaka: I would tell you that I saw the beginning of World War II and I saw the end. Let me put it this way, on December 7th, about 7:30, 7:45 a.m., on a Sunday I was at school at Kamehameha which is on the hillside and because of the noise we are hearing, we looked out and saw Pearl Harbor being bombed. And I recall watching Arizona being bombed and how it tilted and burned for days following that, and we didn't know what this was all about until a squadron of airplanes passed over us to bomb Kāne'ohe which was on the other side of the island. And saw on the wing of the airplanes this red figure that was the sun and all of a sudden recognized that these were Japanese planes. And that was the beginning of the war. And then I went into service and ended my service in Saipan and Tinian and it was there that the atom bomb was flown out to bomb Japan and when that occurred, Japan surrendered. So that's the end of the war; and while in the Marianas we knew we had the atom bomb and that we knew that one day it was going to be flown out but we didn't know when. But that did happen and Japan surrendered, so I can say I saw the beginning and the end of World War II but it made a huge difference for me because I graduated from Kamehameha in 1942 and there is a plaque by the way up on the mountains above Kamehameha school that has my name and others of my classmates because on December 7th were activated. Kamehameha at that time was known as a military school and we wore uniforms from the time we got up and went to bed, but we were activated and went into the hills and at that time our mission was to prevent any paratroopers, some how they felt would land there to get to the water reservoirs, and so here like young kids are out there with our rifles at night and served there for a while and as a result of that, they put up a plaque with our names on it. But that was the beginning of it and later on I was drafted into the military, went into the Army, went to 13th Repple Depple which is at Scofield, trained for six weeks and after that we boarded troopships and headed for the Pacific. We didn't know where we were going really, but the first landfall was the Marshall Islands and the first landfall was Enewetak at that time. Following that we went to Guam, and Guam at the time was taking over the Japanese and from Guam we went over to Saipan and I remained on Saipan until the war ended and also Tinian which is the island next to it. But on Saipan as I recall it, I really felt, it really effected me at that time because there were Japanese families who went to this area that was called Marpi Point or Suicide Cliff and walk right over. And we

couldn't stop them because they felt the Americans were going to kill them but that was happening on Saipan and I was glad that the war ended in 1945 in August and I was able to get home by December of '45 and I went back to Hawaii, I wasn't out of the military but I went back to Hawaii, but the other part of serving in World War II, it was really helpful, was that GI Bill because all of us—Dan Inouye, Spark Matsunaga—used it and went to college and the GI Bill paid our way. And this in a sense brought a change to our country because even in Hawaii since 1900, Hawaii has been predominantly Republican, but when we came back from the wars and started to run for office, it shifted towards the Democrats and as you know in 1954 when we came back, Hawaii flipped and became Democratic in legislature and has been since then, 1954. And then in 1959 we became a state and John Burns who became Governor of Hawaii was a delegate from the islands here and was very key in bringing that about and finally passing statehood here in the Congress with Alaska. And I should tell you there was a debate about who goes first Alaska or Hawaii and Alaska went first because Alaska was Democratic and Hawaii was noted as being a Republican state and Sam Rayburn, at that time they told me permitted the Committee to take it up on that basis and so in March of '59 Alaska became a state and in August of that year Hawaii became a state. And I would tell you now that if Alaska didn't make Hawaii wouldn't have made it. But this is how we became a state during Sam Rayburn's times, but World War II really changed Hawaii, economically as well and has changed this nation and much of the leadership there after were by people participated in the Second World War and has been said that was the greatest generation so World War II made a huge difference in my life and in the direction of the United States of America as well.

Hawaii and National Security

Ron Sarasin: One of the current committee assignments you have is on Homeland Security, do you see Hawaii as having special needs in that regard, or any greater needs than perhaps any other states in the Union?

Senator Akaka: Yes, Hawaii has different needs and from other states as well because it's an island community situated out there in the Pacific, so we cannot call to another state for help as the states

can do now. So we have a distance problem, we have a time problem as well, so our needs are slightly different but I thank God for Hawaii because Hawaii is a state of people who work relatively well together so that their planning really helps the situations out there and even some of the hurricanes and the disasters that happen out in Hawaii are quickly cared for. For instance, when we had hurricanes, the people in communities would help each other, they would cook for each other and in that way it really helped to bring back communities. I would say faster than noted in other places and its because of people relationships. But as far as disasters are concerned, Hawaii suffers from it, we've been able to get help from FEMA at that time and FEMA is now with Homeland Security and Homeland Security of course embraces all of the United States including Hawaii and has given the focus as well as the time to deal with some of the problems that Hawaii has or probably can face in the future.

The Akaka Bill

Ron Sarasin: One of the things you're known for is the bill you've sponsored in recent years known as the Akaka Bill which is to achieve for native Hawaiians the same federal regulation and right to self government the way the Native Americans currently possess. Tell me about that, what does it do and why is it necessary?

Senator Akaka: We have a long history on that. I've been working with that bill for six years now and one of the reasons for it is to bring parity among what I call indigenous peoples of the United States. The American Indians, or the other Alaskan natives, and Hawaii, the native Hawaiians, and the native Hawaiians are not included in the indigenous group nor are they recognized for that and so that's one of the reasons why I'm trying to do this. And the other is that Hawaii was once a sovereign country, we had a kingdom that had treaties with the United States and it was overthrown in 1893 by American people. And I say people because I think most of them were business people who had ties in with the American government so that the United States sent a warship to support the overthrow of Hawaii. And they overthrew the Hawaiian kingdom in 1893. Now when that happened the Hawaiians lost their sovereignty and we became a territory in 1900. But between the territoryship and the kingdom there was a Republic of Hawaii was formed that was headed by President Dole at

that time and they worked it so that we would become annexed to the United States and we did become annexed in 1900 and in 1959 we became a state to the United States. But during that period of time, Hawaiians were just part of the territory at that time but they were scattered, meaning that there was no governance for the people and as a result like other native groups they suffered without really knowing it but when you look at the statistics you can see they are on the low end of many of the problems of Hawaii and I attribute that to the overthrow and also the Hawaiians being scattered in their own land. Now Prince Kuhio [Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaʻole] did in his time as a House member did realize there were problems, so he passed a bill in the Congress that provided for what they call Hawaiian homelands, and it was passed by the Congress. And that went into effect in 1921 and it exists today as well, Lands are set aside to provide housing for Hawaiians but still there was no governance or provided homes for them and so in 1993, which is 100 years from 1893. I felt I'm going to push this and I came across with an Apology Bill that was passed by the Congress and was signed by at that time President Clinton apologizing for the overthrow. Now in there I had a key word that was 'reconciliation' and so I looked upon bringing governance back to the Hawaiians and that this governance would be under the laws of the state and the United States government as well. And so I created five task forces to do this and quickly one of the task forces was Hawaiian, native Hawaiian leaders, another one was native Hawaiian, not native Hawaiian but officials of the state of Hawaii, and then another one that was of American Indians and Alaskans and constitutional scholars and that one was put together to benefit from what they've gone through and also there was another one of officials of the federal government who worked with Hawaiian issues and we put that task force together, and the last one was task force of Congressional caucuses like the Black Caucus and the other caucuses that were here and together we crafted this bill. And so this bill was to provide and there's the word reorganization in there to provide governing entity of Hawaiians that would take care of their kinds of issues but to bring them together in governance and also to bring about their recognition of native Hawaiians as indigenous peoples of Hawaii and of the United States of America, and of course we've had opposition but this has become a bipartisan bill that the present governor whose Republican supported it from the beginning, the legislature in Hawaii supports it, most of the Hawaiian

organizations in Hawaii support it, and so we've been working with that kind of support. Last year the ABA supported it so when the people, some of the opposition argue that my bill is unconstitutional, it can't be because we've had DOJ justice review it and DOI interior review it as well that it is a legitimate bill. But for the Hawaiians I feel its going to really bring them back to life and will help raise their levels as native Hawaiians and I feel that native Hawaiians have something to offer, not only in Hawaii but our country in the world. And my hope is this governing entity will bring this together and give them governance that they did not have for a while but also bring about a spirit of bringing the culture of Hawaii together and to use it in working in our country and the world.

Ron Sarasin: One of the arguments made against the bill would be that it adds to the separatism, it doesn't bring people together, you're creating a separate group and how do you counter that argument?

Senator Akaka: I disagree with that. I disagree with that because I feel that when a group is strong and it's like cutting the roots from the tree, you know we were once a kingdom, we had governance and we lost it and I feel that by bringing this back, it'll bring back a culture that is good for Hawaii and the people. And I think it'll make a difference in what'll happen in Hawaii in the future, and it binds people together. Now I talked to leaders of Alaska and they said the same arguments that are being used against my bill was used against their bill when they wanted to have that Alaskan native group. And they said separatism was being used and dividing Alaska and they said the opposite has happened in Alaska and it pulled the people together and that's what's going to happen to Hawaii. So, and even there was a move to say that my bill would bring about secession and the Hawaiians would secede—no way would that happen because this group would, whatever they do, they would have to work with the state government as well as the federal government.

Reducing Partisanship

Ron Sarasin: We talked earlier about the partisanship in the House and in the Senate, recently there's a book which was written, *The Broken Branch* by Norm Ornstein and Tom Mann who are both Congressional scholars who followed the Congress for years and

years. And they both argue that the partisanship that we see there prevents the Congress from working well and prevents them from performing their constitutional duty. I think everyone sees an increase in partisanship. As someone who has been there for quite a while with a great deal of experience, what do you think can be done to reduce that level of partisanship, what should the Congress be doing, what should individuals be doing to try and bring people together a little more?

Senator Akaka: In the situation presently, I would say that the Congress needs to realize that we are a separate branch of government meaning that we should be making decisions by ourselves as a Congress and what I'm referring to is many decisions have been effected by the Administration or the Executive Branch and this has caused a stronger I feel partisanship in the past but since 2007 I think a change might be coming about on it but I think important is that Congress should realize that it is a separate branch of government and that we should make our, what we call our own decisions and do it in such a way where we work together with the different branches, with the different parties. And right now I smilingly say that we're tri-partisan group, we have independent members as well now besides Republicans and Democrats. But we need to look at the issues and work on the issues and look at it as what's best for the people of America. And I think if we turn our focus in that way to congressional leadership I think the bi-partisanship separation will lessen.

Ron Sarasin: Why is it different today when you have, you pointed out the Republicans held the House, the Senate, and the Administration, but the partisanship seems to be less in the days of Lyndon Johnson when the Democrats held the House, the Senate, and the administration and Johnson had an agenda of his own that the House and Senate ran through rather quickly. Why does it seem that way with that same kind of involvement with the administration there was less partisanship?

Senator Akaka: Again I feel that at that time it was still a sense of feeling that the Congress was a separate branch of government and had its own leadership, although President Johnson came from the Senate as well and had many friends, I feel that at that time they still

felt that they had their own leadership of the Congress and would do what they felt was in the best interest of the people. And I think by giving up this leadership and relationship with other branches we tend to build another kind of relationship of partisanship and I think our focus will change with Democrats being in the majority and I know we are trying our best to try and work together and I really commend leader Reid [Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid] and leader McConnell [Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell] because I know that they are both trying their best to work together and as you know, it's not that easy when you have members behind you that may disagree with what your feelings are, but I think our leaders are committed to doing that and that's really the beginning of changing our bipartisan relationships.

Memories of Speakers Carl Albert and John McCormack

Ron Sarasin: You had mentioned to me earlier comments you have thought of Speaker Albert and Speaker McCormack, what are those?

Senator Akaka: Yes, there was one day when Speaker O'Neill called me into his ceremonial office and I was surprised at that. But when I went in I was more surprised, I saw Carl Albert sitting there and John McCormack. And the Speaker said 'Danny I just wanted you to come in and meet the Speakers' and so I met them and I wanted to mention this because I felt so privileged to be there with the Speakers and also to have John McCormack tell me 'you know young man' at that time, he said 'you know young man, I was in Congress when your Prince was a member of Congress' and then he went on to describe the Prince and what the Prince did while he was there and it was just something I never read in books. But to have this mentioned to me by McCormack, it was really a thrill. And then McCormack went on to tell me how we got statehood and told me how Sam Rayburn was dead against it and he didn't want it because Hawaii was way out there and Alaska was way out North and didn't want it. And so Burns, John Burns who became governor of Hawaii was very friendly with LBJ, now McCormack is tell me this, and he said he talked to it with LBJ who talked to Rayburn because they were Texas buddies, in which LBJ did and LBJ said no way, the Speaker doesn't want it, so Burns pursued it with LBJ and finally, according to John McCormack, LBJ told Rayburn if you don't do it, when the Republicans take over, the

are going to do it. That Rayburn didn't like that and said oh no, he said no we do things around, and he said the Mr. Speaker, we need to let this go through Committee. And according to John McCormack, that was the difference, so the next day the committee met on this and went through the committee and then came up to the floor. But I never knew that story, and then he also told me why Alaska went first. And as I said, Rayburn wanted Alaska because Alaska was Democratic and would like Alaska to be a state but not Hawaii. But when Alaska became a state, they couldn't keep Hawaii out. All of that was told to me by John McCormack and I thought, wow, what a thrill this was for me to sit among them and to hear all this and that was one of the meetings I really treasured.

The Statue of Freedom

Ron Sarasin: You've had a very special relationship to the Statue of Freedom that sits on top of our Capitol Building, tell us about that.

Senator Akaka: Yes, well as member of the House, I learned that there was a Statue of Freedom that was in a warehouse, a plaster model and at that time what impressed me was that the Statue of Freedom was important to our country and its located on the top of the dome of our Capitol. And that it was erected in 1893, in 1863 I'm sorry, but after that was done the plaster statue was put away, well I wanted that statue out and discovered that it belonged to the Smithsonian Institute and there was a battle about who would have the jurisdiction over that. We were able to work it out so it was transferred to the Capitol, now when that was done I worked with a group of people from Hawaii who were interested in this and if you look at the Russell Rotunda now there is that plaster statue. And there's a sign there that tells people about the statue and also on the last line it has the name of the foundation that help me do this, and they provided funds to bring it out and restore it. So it was restored because it wasn't that kind of space around except for that Rotunda, we brought it in and erected it there, at that time there were lost fingers and lost stars, but all of that was put back. So the statue now is whole and the idea here was we wanted freedom to come back to the United States and this is one way of doing it on a level where people can look at it and that was, you know on the floor and not necessarily on the Dome. So as a result this was erected and

completed and its there but for me that was not the final place, at the time when we started this I didn't know that they were going to have a visiting center but now that the visitors center is almost complete and I have been working with architect and some of the members of the Senate to be sure that that statue is in the visitors center. And right now I understand that the plans are to put it between the two escalators that will lead up to the Capitol and it will be placed in the middle there and for me that would mean freedom returns to the United States of America and it'll be a place where people can go up to it, look at it and there will be a second floor where they can look and see that its not a bird that's on the head, but see the whole figure and for me that's so important that when that happens it'll really, it'll be the shining light for my career here.

Legacy

Ron Sarasin: Over and above the things you have accomplished, or have yet to accomplish, how would you like to be remembered?

Senator Akaka: I really want to be remembered as a member of Congress, that I served the people of America and of Hawaii well and during the time I've been here that has been my intent. I wanted to do my best to help all peoples of our country and help them live a better life and also to bring back values to the Congress as well as to this country, that I feel important and for me as you know my family has been very religious and I tell you that has really kept me well all of these years and I really cherish that and hope that what I do can reflect this to people.