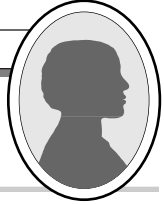


BIOGRAPHY



Daniel K. Inouye



Daniel Inouye is the first American of Japanese descent to serve in the United States Congress. Since 1962 he has been a senator from Hawaii.

As you read the passage below, think of the ways that Daniel Inouye's work on the home front compared with the efforts of other Americans during World War II.

Daniel Inouye is a Nisei—a person born in America to parents who had immigrated from Japan. He was born in 1924, in Honolulu, Hawaii, and named after the Methodist minister who had adopted his orphaned mother.

Inouye grew up in a working-class family and learned to assume responsibilities at an early age. In high school, he earned extra money by giving haircuts to fellow students and by parking cars at a sports stadium. Although money was limited, young Daniel never felt poor. “I was too young to realize how underprivileged I was.”

Daniel Inouye's early education was a blend of Japanese and American cultures. He learned to speak Japanese first and then learned English as a second language. He attended both a regular public school and a Japanese school.

By the time he was in high school, Daniel Inouye had decided to become a surgeon. He took a Red Cross first-aid course, worked as a volunteer, and later taught first aid to others. In December of his senior year, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and Inouye was ordered to put his first-aid skills to immediate use. During the emergency period following the bombing of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, he worked as head of a first-aid litter team, catching a few minutes of sleep between crises.

Following the declaration of war against Japan, anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States intensified. In Hawaii, Japanese American men were discharged from the Hawaiian National

Guard and were not permitted to enlist in the army. In 1943 when this policy was reversed, Inouye dropped out of college and volunteered for military service. He joined the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which was composed of Nisei, and was shipped to Italy. During an especially fierce battle, Inouye's right arm was shattered and had to be amputated. He spent 20 months in the hospital and returned home a highly decorated officer, but unable to fulfill his dream of becoming a surgeon.

Inouye returned to the University of Hawaii and then went to Washington, D.C., to study law at George Washington University. Following graduation, he returned to Hawaii, where he served as Honolulu's Deputy Public Prosecutor and became active in politics.

When Hawaii became a state in 1959, Daniel Inouye was elected its first representative to the U.S. House of Representatives. Some years later, a colleague, Representative Leo O'Brien, recalled Inouye's swearing-in:

'Raise your right hand and repeat after me,' intoned Speaker Sam Rayburn.

The hush deepened as the young Congressman raised not his right hand but his left and he repeated the oath of office.

There was no right hand, Mr. Speaker. It had been lost in combat by that young American soldier in World War II. Who can deny that, at that moment, a ton of prejudice slipped quietly to the floor of the House of Representatives?

Questions to Think About

1. How did Inouye serve on both the home front and the battlefield?
2. **Identifying Assumptions** Why did Representative O'Brien think that prejudice slipped to the floor during the swearing-in of Inouye?