

From Ordinary to Extraordinary:

Senator Daniel Inouye

Tiana Guerrero

Kamehameha Schools Maui

Go for Broke National Education Center's  
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Soldier, senator, and inspiration to the world are just a few words that describe a true American hero. Senator Daniel Ken "Dan" Inouye, was a man of little words who made a big impact in his lifetime. He was once just a boy from Hawai'i, who served with the all-Nisei 442<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, but his story is one that can inspire me and the world.

Without a second thought, Inouye became a war hero. On April 21, 1945, Inouye's platoon was leading an assault near Tuscany, Italy, when German soldiers opened fire. Inouye was shot in the stomach, but he ignored his wound and continued to fight, destroying one of three machine gun nests. He destroyed a second one before collapsing from blood loss. Even so, Inouye crawled toward the last German bunker. When he stood to throw his last grenade, an enemy shot him in the right elbow, severing most of his arm. While the shooter reloaded, Inouye took the live grenade from his useless right hand and transferred it to his left. As the German aimed his rifle, Inouye tossed the grenade into the bunker, destroyed it, and saved his fellow soldiers.

When he was released from the army, he received America's highest honors, and, although he had lost his right arm in the war, he learned how to function without it. His dreams of becoming a doctor over, he went into politics. In 1962, he was elected into the U.S. Senate and served eight consecutive terms until his death in 2012.

Senator Inouye's story is meaningful because it inspires me to never give up. In the war, Inouye was severely injured, but continued to fight. I was once in a situation where I, too, had to continue to fight for the good of my team. I was cheering at the Hawai'i State Championships, and within seconds of the beginning of our routine, I felt my knee pop out of place. I proceeded, even though I was in pain, because I knew my team needed me. My knee popped in and out of place throughout our two-and-a-half minute performance, and I fought my hardest to finish, but two seconds before the end of the performance I collapsed and was carried off the floor. I later found out I had torn my anterior cruciate ligament in two places.

I can't cheer any more, but I have the rest of my life to live, and though I don't know where my endeavors will take me, Inouye has taught me that when life gets tough, persevere until you accomplish your dreams. When asked about his legacy once, he simply said, "I represented the people of Hawaii and this nation honestly and to the best of my ability. I think I did OK." Just as Inouye represented his nation, state, and family with honor and nobility, I hope that at the end of my road, I will be able to say that I gave all I had and went "for broke."