

Towson, Maryland, Petty Officer 2nd Class Edward Austin Koth.

Unfortunately, over 2,500 United States servicemen and women have died in the War in Iraq. Each time a servicemember dies, we are reminded of our gratitude for the Armed Services; these people have built a career around protecting American citizens. The drive and conviction Petty Officer Koth and his peers show each day is commendable.

Petty Officer Koth died as a result of an explosive weapon at Camp Victoria, Iraq detonating. He was assigned to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 8, serving with Multinational Corps Iraq in Baghdad at the time of his death. He was on his second tour of Iraq with only 3 weeks remaining.

Petty Officer Koth is remembered as a devoted sailor who found extreme pride in saving the lives of innocent people. He protected his fellow servicemen and women, and Iraqi civilians by removing bombs from heavily populated marketplaces. He frequently called or wrote home saying he had neutralized a number of bombs while he was a part of the Army Rangers Unit that drove through Baghdad in Humvees and Bradley fighting vehicles in search of such explosives.

Serving the United States of America was in Petty Officer Koth's blood. Both of his grandfathers and four of his uncles served in the United States Navy. This magnanimous serviceman was ambitious and confident from the time he was young. As the youngest of four children, he was well-known for his courage. This notable trait propelled him toward his future in the Armed Services.

While enrolled in Loyola College, Koth joined the diving team where he excelled greatly. Upon obtaining his degree in information systems, Petty Officer Koth went on to train with dolphins at the Naval School of Explosive Ordnance Disposal in Florida. There his notability as a fearless diver taught him how to take apart underwater mines, a task that prepared him for his naval career of dismantling explosives.

His passion for life made him a champion in the eyes of fellow service men and the women

and Iraqi people. Mr. Speaker, I ask you to join with me today to celebrate the life of Petty Officer 2nd Class Edward Austin Koth. His selfless acts of compassion make him truly worthy of great recognition. He will forever be remembered as a Maryland hero.

CONGRATULATING GEORGE
NA'OPE AS A 2006 NATIONAL
HERITAGE FELLOW

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to and congratulate Kumu Hula George Lanakilakeikiahiali'i Na'ope, known in our Hawai'i as "Uncle George," on being chosen as a 2006 National Heritage Fellow, our Nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts.

Each year the National Endowment for the Arts awards the coveted National Heritage Fellowships to a select few masters of folk and traditional arts who demonstrate outstanding lifetime achievement and artistic merit. Fellows are carefully selected from among hundreds of nominees based on authenticity, excellence, and significance within a particular artistic tradition. There is no one more deserving than Hawai'i's own George Na'ope to receive this high honor for his contributions to the art of traditional hula and chant.

George was born on February 25, 1928, in Kalihi, O'ahu and grew up in Hilo on the island of Hawai'i. He began his hula studies at the age of 3 and has dedicated his entire life to this ancient art form. Na'ope's first hula lessons were under the tutelage of Mary Kanaile Fujii, the mother of Edith Kanaka'ole, and his studies were directed by his great-grandmother Mary Malia Pukaokalani Na'ope and his grandfather Harry Na'ope. He further studied under Joseph Ila'laole and opened up the George Na'ope Hula School in Honolulu after his graduation from Hilo High School.

George would later go on to a successful career traveling throughout the United States with the Ray Kinney Royal Hawaiian Review, performing regularly at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. He still found time to obtain his PhD from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and to teach hula in underserved communities.

But his achievements did not stop there. George also served our country for 2 years in frontline combat during the Korean conflict with the X Corps of the American Corps of Engineers. After his return to Hawai'i he was appointed "Promoter of Activities" with the County of Hawaii. While serving in this capacity, he was recognized in 1960 by the Governor of the State of Hawai'i and Hawai'i State Legislature with the designation "Living Golden Treasure".

George Na'ope was a prime catalyst for renewed interest in and study of traditional hula, chants, music, and other aspects of Hawaiian culture. It was also during this time and with George's patronage that the world-famous Merrie Monarch Festival was founded in 1962. This festival honors King David Kalakaua who was nicknamed the "Merrie Monarch" because of his support for music and the arts and his encouragement of the revival of Native Hawaiian traditions like hula and mele. Forty-four years later, the festival is still going strong and has become a must-see for Hawai'i residents and visitors.

A lifelong teacher, George Na'ope has taught the dance of Hawai'i around the world and performed for dignitaries and world leaders. His lasting timeless contributions and influence, through the many students he inspired, as well as the many extraordinary contributions he made to the traditional arts heritage of Hawai'i and our Nation, are truly exceptional and worthy of national recognition.

I close by saying to Uncle George: congratulations on receiving the National Heritage Fellowship and mahalo for all you have done for our Hawai'i and our Nation's cultural heritage. Aloha!