
Honoring Robert “Bobby” Fujimoto



A 1945 graduate of Hilo High School, Robert Fujimoto’s high school years coincided with the dark years of World War II. One of his most vivid memories of his high school days was participating in a national effort called the High School Victory Corps. “We were taken out to canefields every Friday,” Robert explains. “We worked ‘hoe hana’ in the canefield all day on Fridays.”

Robert’s service to his country continued, as he enlisted in the U.S. Army immediately after graduation. After completing his military service, Robert earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and Economics from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1951. That same year, he joined Hawaii Planing Mill, Ltd. (now HPM Building Supply), which his grandfather founded in 1921. In 1955, Robert became the Executive Vice President and General Manager of the company when his father passed away. He later served as the company’s President and then Chairman of the Board, which he remains today.

A tremendously successful businessman, education has always been a high priority for Robert. He served on the UH Board of Regents, the UH Foundation Board of Trustees, and the UH Hilo Chancellor’s Advisory Board. “It started with a foundation to give scholarships under my father’s name,” Robert explains. He still serves as Chair of the Barney S. Fujimoto Memorial Scholarship which annually provides scholarships to students attending UH system schools.

“Later, when I became a member of the Board of Regents, my wife and I started to do more with education. Through the Robert M. and Alice K. Fujimoto Foundation, he and his wife have supported the UH Hilo Theatre, the UH Hilo Mookini Library, and the Hawaii District Science & Engineering Fair of the Department of Education. The couple’s Foundation also supports the Young at Art Program of the East Hawaii Cultural Center and the Hilo Medical Center Foundation.

Robert’s private and community service contributions also include: the Aloha Council, Boy Scouts of America; the Blood Bank of Hawaii; C. Brewer; First Insurance; Grand Pacific Life; and American Security Bank. He served as Corporate Division chair of the Hawaii Island United Way Fund Drive and is a member of the Rotary Club of Hilo.

Robert was awarded the Regional Silver Beaver and Antelope Awards from the Boy Scouts of America; Distinguished Honoree of the Public Schools of Hawaii Foundation; the University of Hawaii Distinguished Alumni Award; the State of Hawaii Young Man of the Year Award; the State of Hawaii Small Businessman of the Year Award; and is a laureate of Junior Achievement of Hawaii’s Business Hall of Fame. That’s not bad for someone who humbly characterizes his generous contributions to education by saying, “I didn’t learn anything in school, so I hope someone else will!”
