



Aiko I Nakatsukasa

March 3, 1929 - July 15, 2020

OBITUARY:

Aiko Irene Nakatsukasa, 91, a longtime resident of Gardena and Escondido and a recent resident of Silverado Beach Cities, passed away on July 15, 2020. She was preceded in death by her husband, Tom, and is survived by her three children, Todd (and his wife, Cyd), Roy (and his wife, Susan), and Grace, and by her four grandchildren, Tyler, Haley, Alyssa, and Rachel. Aiko was born in Ashiya, Japan, and came to America when she married Tom. She was an accomplished seamstress and enjoyed reading, doing puzzles, and spending time with her children and grandchildren.

MOM'S PERSONAL HISTORY:

Aiko Irene Nakatsukasa was born on March 3, 1929 in the city of Ashiya, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, to Umekichi and Ryu Sato. Umekichi was from Wakuya in the Miyagi Prefecture, born June 23, 1890, and Ryu was from Shimonoseki in the Yamaguchi Prefecture, born October 25, 1897. Ryu was born Ryu Okada. Aiko, or Aichan as she was called by her siblings, was the 6th of 7 kids, and was the 4th and last girl.

Note, most of the stories of my mom's life in Japan were shared by my cousin's oldest daughter Mari, our only English-speaking relative in Japan. Her mom Masako is my cousin and is the source of most of these stories. For some reason, mom did not tell us many stories from her past, even if asked. Dad was the real story teller, but this story is about mom.

In her younger years, mom liked singing, dancing Bon Odori, going to Omatsuri festivals, swimming in the ocean, and playing games such as ohajiki otedama. Her parents had a family grocery store in the front of the house, so she also helped making deliveries for the store.

Mom's father was a Christian man, so mom grew up attending the Kobe Eiko Church or

the Kobe Union Protestant Church, where she sang in the choir.

Mom's family was more westernized than other families at that time. For instance, they had a piano in the house, and they bought furniture from France, which was uncommon. The family apparently enjoyed ballroom dancing too. The family enjoyed a relatively 'free family' environment.

Thanks to the family grocery store, during WWII, mom's family had access to more food than the average Japanese citizen, which is fortunate. Mari says that my mom's family was more 'optimistic' than others, therefore they missed hearing the emperor's famous speech on Aug 15th, 1945 when he announced Japan's surrender to the United States. Her high school was cut short by a year due to the war.

Her early years were influenced by American missionaries at a Methodist Church in Kobe. In her teens and early 20's, mom enjoyed sewing and making clothes for others. She considered becoming a hairdresser or dressmaker. Other things mom enjoyed in Japan were watching sumo and making mochitsuki during New Year's celebrations.

Mom learned English and typing at the Palmore Institute, a vocational college in Kobe. The Palmore Institute was destroyed by bombing during WWII but was later rebuilt. She ended up finding a job as a typist at the local GHQ during the U.S. occupation of Japan.

In her late 20's, some stranger, a young Japanese-American man, started writing her letters. She wrote back. He later came to Japan, swept her off her feet, and married her on October 28th, 1958. They were soon on a long boat ride to the U.S. to begin their life together. This new phase of her life began in Redondo Beach, CA, where they first settled.

About a year after moving to the states, their first son Todd was born in November 1959. Dad then decided to take an 18-month job in Alaska working as an Air Force contractor on the DEW line, so mom was left on her own with a newborn. Soon after returning from Alaska, their 2nd son Roy was born in July 1962 and then their only daughter Grace was born a year later in August 1963.

Our family of 5 grew up in Gardena, living in a 2-bedroom house. Mom was a homemaker for most of her life, and spent time in the backyard tending to the vegetable garden, cooking for the family, reading her Japanese books, and basically just taking care of everyone's domestic needs. She was the best cook.

During those years, we took various family vacations; we'd go to Yosemite, the Grand

Canyon, amusement parks, all great family getaways. We visited Japan a few times as a family. Most of our family activities revolved around dad's family, as dad's family all lived in the U.S., whereas mom's relatives all lived in Japan and we rarely heard about them, and of course there was the language barrier. Mom did not talk much about family in Japan. She became a naturalized U.S. citizen on October 25th, 1974.

In the early 1990's after dad retired from Hughes Aircraft Company, they packed up and moved to Escondido, CA, in San Diego County. Dad wanted to have a farm, and mom decided she'd go with him. They spent over 20 years there during their sunset years. Mom enjoyed reading, doing her puzzles, and watching tv when she was not working around the farm. She especially enjoyed walking around the 3 acres and watching the wildlife, such as roadrunners, squirrels, red-tailed hawks, and hummingbirds.

I believe the 20-plus years that my mom and dad spent in Escondido were good years. Family would occasionally visit, and Grace and her family actually lived with them for a couple of years. Us kids would occasionally help harvest some of the longan fruit from the 200+ trees that dad was growing as his retirement hobby. The kids would occasionally help with miscellaneous chores around the farm, spend some holidays out there, and either eat mom-cooked deliciousness or we would bring them food from Gardena, which they also enjoyed.

Mom was usually happy and content, and rarely complained about anything. It was a quiet and peaceful life in Escondido.

In 2017, when taking care of the farm themselves became too difficult, we sold their retirement home and moved them back to Torrance to be closer to family, where we could help take care of them. They were happy to be closer to family and to be taken care of by us kids.

After dad passed in 2018, mom's dementia became worse so we moved her to Silverado Beach Cities Memory Care, an assisted living facility in Redondo Beach. She was well taken care of in Silverado, and enjoyed visits by the kids. She unfortunately passed in July 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made the situation more complicated and difficult, but her passing was due to old age (91) and not the virus.

Mom enjoyed her life and her family. I'd like to thank all of her family and friends for being a part of her life. And I'd like to encourage all of you kids to ask your parents and relatives to share their stories with you too, you just might be surprised at what learn.

Thank you, take care, and be safe.

Love, Todd and family

To keep everyone safe during this COVID-19 pandemic, although we appreciate your desire to pay your respects, we kindly announce that private services will be held for immediate family members only. We thank you for your love and kindness.

Family and friends of Aiko are invited to share their favorite photos, video memories and heart felt messages on her Tribute page on the Green Hills Mortuary Website.

Comments



“ 13 files added to the album Service Photos



Green Hills Mortuary & Memorial Chapel - August 17 at 12:04 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Video Tribute



Green Hills Mortuary & Memorial Chapel - August 13 at 05:45 PM



“ 55 files added to the album Life Tributes



Green Hills Mortuary & Memorial Chapel - August 13 at 05:43 PM



“ Sunny Memories was purchased for the family of Aiko I Nakatsukasa.



August 09 at 01:48 AM