

# In MEMORIAM

## June Sato Dies June 15 at Age 94

She was married to former JACL National President Frank Sato for 70 years.

By P.C. Staff

June Noriko Matsusawa Sato died of natural causes on June 15 in Laguna Niguel, Calif. She was 94.

Sato, who was born in Tacoma, Wash., was the only child of Tsunetsaku Matsusawa and Masao Kikuchi. She was married to Frank Sato on June 14, 1953. "We believe mom waited until after their 70th wedding anniversary to leave us," according to an email from their daughter, Teresa Sato, who noted that her mother went to sleep and "just didn't wake up" and was never in any pain or discomfort.

June Sato's husband was Puyallup, Wash.-born Frank Sato, who served as JACL national president from 1984-86 and during his many years of government service was the inspector general for the Department of Veterans Affairs circa 1981. According to Floyd Shimomura, who preceded Sato as JACL national president, Sato was the "highest-ranking Japanese American" who served during the administration of President Ronald Reagan (see *Pacific Citizen*, Aug. 30, 2019, issue). Prior to that, he served in the administration of President Jimmy Carter as the inspector general of the Department of Transportation.

"We were married for 70 years. So, I just feel so blessed," Frank Sato told the *Pacific Citizen*. "I'm just filled with gratefulness for having her."

The couple met in 1948, a few years after June was released from being incarcerated at the Tule Lake War Relocation Authority Center and had returned to Tacoma, where she attended the Whitney Methodist Church. Frank recalled how meeting June at a church youth group meeting as an 18-year-old was a real-life love-at-first sight situation.

"I had to go to Tacoma for some business for my dad, and afterwards, I thought, 'Well, it's Friday night, the youth group should be meeting,' so I went by to join the youth group at their meeting.

"I walked in this room, and there were three young girls across the other side of the room, and for whatever reason, she got my attention right away. During the course of the evening, I went over and introduced myself. . . . Before the evening was over, I asked her for a phone number and asked her if I could call her. And she said yes, and I called her back, and we had our first date a week later."

It would, however, be five years before June and Frank tied the proverbial knot. "In those days," Frank Sato said, "if you didn't have a job, you didn't even think about getting married. I worked to save money



June Sato (foreground) and Frank Sato (standing) were married for 70 years and one day. She died of natural causes on June 15 at 94.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE SATO FAMILY

and go to college. And the day after I got my degree, we were married." He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Washington. During that time, June was also pursuing higher education. She graduated from the University of Washington's Nursing School in 1952.

"She got her RN before I finished college, and she was working as a nurse," Frank Sato said, adding that once they started having children — five in all — her priority became taking care of the brood. He added, however, that after the kids had left for college, she worked in public health and for a pediatric physician.

Frank Sato was particularly impressed with June Sato's resourcefulness and organizational abilities, citing how, when he went ahead from Southern California to find housing in Washington, D.C., when he was transferred for his auditing career with the federal government, she "traveled across country with five kids by herself" — with the youngest, Dean, just four months old.

Teresa Sato also vouches for her mother's abilities. "Mom was an amazing cook and baker. . . . She frequently made all the food for

dinner parties with 30-40 people from dad's office," she noted. "We all remember how organized she was, kept the house immaculate despite having four boys, cooked all our meals from scratch, and we always had homemade dessert after dinner."

As for adjusting to life in the nation's capital, Frank Sato said his wife, "loved Washington, D.C. . . . I had an unbelievable career. I worked for the Reagan administration for eight years, the Carter administration for two years. And you know, she was always supportive of everything I did. She enjoyed Washington, the kids enjoyed Washington. It is almost an unbelievable kind of marriage situation."

Frank Sato attested to how June Sato was the secret weapon behind his successful career. "People wanted to come to work for me, and part of that was June helped me build the morale of my staff and my leadership."

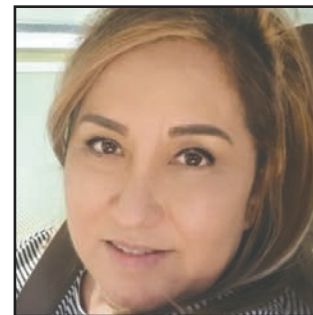
Thinking back over the 70 years of marriage to June, Frank said, "You know, we had an incredible time together. My job had me traveling around the world, and I took her to as many places as I could." Those locales included Cairo, Egypt, Paris, London, China, Japan (several times), Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. There was also a historic state dinner they attended at the State Department when the guest was the crown prince of Japan. "He of course is the man who is currently the emperor of Japan," he noted.

In addition to husband Frank Sato and daughter Teresa Sato (and her husband, Rick Wilkerson), June Sato is survived by her children, John Sato (Cynthia), Greg Sato (Holly) and Glenn Sato, as well as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Son Dean Sato died in 1980.

Remembering his life with June, Frank said, "All I can say, I was always just a pretty lucky guy to meet her when I did."

**Arakaki, Stanley Kenso, 95**, Honolulu, HI, Feb. 2.

**Fujii, Mark M., 59**, Honolulu, HI, Jan. 15; 2 B.A.s, University of Hawaii; he is survived by his wife, Colleen; stepson, Anthony Pirl (Marian); sister, Stacey Fujii; and brother-in-law, John Walz.



**Harada, Sherry Marie Keiko, 52**, Miliani, HI, March 10; she is survived by her husband, Kevin; sons, Michael J. K. Harada and Jonathan N. K. Harada; parents, Russell K. Takara and Madeline (Terry) Takara; siblings, Chad Takara and Lisa Higa (Kevin).

**Ishii, Sumiko, 91**, Springfield, VA, Feb. 12; she is survived by her husband, Masaharu; daughters, Sylvia (Robert) Malinowski, Carol Devine and Audrey (Donald) Curran; brothers, Osamu (Michiko), Tadashi (Nagako) and Hiroshi (Chizu); gc: 7; ggc: 2.

**Nakata, Jeanette Ayako, 88**, Torrance, CA, Feb. 24; she is survived by her brothers Ken (Jen) Nakata and Ronald Nakata; sister-in-law, Inez Nakata; and many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

**Okumura, Gerald, 78**, Sacramento, CA, Feb. 13; he was predeceased by his brother, Richard Okumura; he is survived by his wife, Carleen; children, Michael and Lesley Kelley (Sean); and sister, Gale Okumura; gc: 2.

**Tani, Yoshiko, 101**, St. Paul, MN, Dec. 3, 2022; during WWII, her family and she were incarcerated at the Minidoka WRA Center in ID; B.S., Milwaukee-Downer College; activities included volunteering for the St. Paul YMCA, Ramsey County Medical Society, Metropolitan Committee on Aging, the Red Cross, the St. Paul/Nagasaki Sister City Community, JACL and JASM; she was predeceased by her husband, George; and brothers, Aiji Uchiyama and Hiroshi Uchiyama; she is survived by her children, Paul (Barb), Douglas (Linnea), Kay (Tom) Winegarden; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and friends; gc: 7; ggc: 10.

**Uyetake, Kenji, 78**, Seal Beach, CA, May 22; he is survived by his wife, Pam Sasuga; sons Kenny (Amanda) Uyetake and Joey Uyetake; his sister, Sue Miyazaki; and by many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

**Yamaguchi, Tamiko, 86**, Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 17; during WWII, while incarcerated at the Manzanar WRA Center, she was adopted by Keikoh Kitahara after the death of her father; she is survived by her husband, Jack; children, Kevin (Roblay), Douglas (Lina) and Russell (Janet); siblings, Tamio (Helene) Kitahara and Yuki (Cedric) Morita Scott; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 6.

TRIBUTE

OSAMU SHIMADA



Osamu Sam Shimada passed away on June 21, 2023. He is survived by his wife, Fumie, children, Warren (Liz), Howard and Cheryl, and five grandchildren. A memorial service will take place at the Sacramento Buddhist Church in Sacramento on Sunday, July 16, at 1 p.m. Casual attire and otoki following.

TRIBUTE

BRUCE FRANK YAMANAKA



March 10, 1965-April 14, 2023  
Resident of Alameda, Calif.

Bruce passed away at the age of 58. He was the youngest son born to Ben and Helen Yamanaka. Bruce is survived by his mother, Helen, brother, Benjamin, and sons Brendan and Brady. Bruce was preceded in death by his father, Ben Yamanaka.

Bruce was born in Yokosuka, Japan, and moved to Alameda Calif., as a child. He attended and graduated from Donald D. Lum Grade School,

Will C. Wood Middle School and Encinal High School. Bruce went to work at UPS and the San Jose Arena.

Bruce moved to Colorado, where he got married to Molly Purcell and had two sons, Brendan and Brady.

Bruce later returned to Alameda and became the caretaker to his father and mother. He took a job working at Pear Tree Produce Co.

He was a loving son, a caring father and a wonderful brother and will be missed by all.

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