

George Ariyoshi, 100, Dies

First Asian American governor served thrice in Hawaii.

HONOLULU (AP) — Former Hawaii Gov. George R. Ariyoshi — the nation's first Asian American governor — has died at age 100.

Ariyoshi, a Democrat who led the state from 1973-86, died peacefully while surrounded by family on April 19, according to a statement from current Gov. Josh Green on April 20.

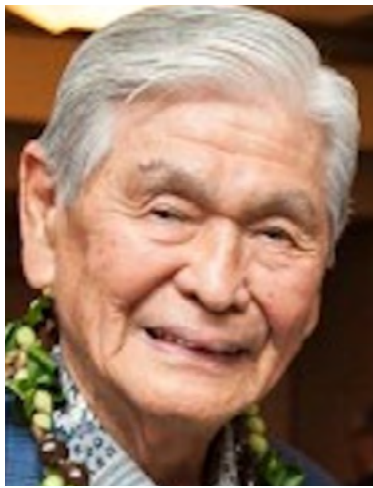
"Gov. Ariyoshi devoted his life to Hawaii with humility, discipline and an unwavering sense of responsibility to the people he served," Green said. "He led our state during a pivotal moment with quiet strength and integrity, and his legacy as a trailblazer and public servant will endure for generations."

Ariyoshi was a three-term governor who first rose to the position in October 1973. Three years earlier, he had been elected lieutenant governor, and he then became acting governor when Gov. John Burns fell ill with cancer.

Ariyoshi won the office outright in 1974 and was reelected in 1978 and 1982. Hawaii governors are now subject to a two-term limit. His political career coincided with the Democratic Party's rise to power in Hawaii.

Democrats wrested control of the legislature from Republicans in 1954, the year Ariyoshi won the first of two terms in the Territorial House of Representatives. He won a territorial Senate seat in 1958, becoming a state senator the following year when Hawaii became a state.

Ariyoshi won three more state



George Ariyoshi

PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Senate races — in 1964, 1966 and 1968 — before becoming lieutenant governor.

Ariyoshi was born on March 12, 1926, in a two-room tenement near Honolulu Harbor to parents who immigrated to Hawaii from Japan. He grew up in the hard-scrabble neighborhood of Kalihi, near downtown Honolulu.

His father, Ryozo, a sumo wrestler from Fukuoka Prefecture, became a stevedore and owner of a dry cleaning shop in Hawaii. His mother, Mitsue, came from Kumamoto, Japan.

In his 1997 autobiography, "With Obligation to All," Ariyoshi wrote about growing up with a lisp.

"The fact that we had no money did not seem to be a barrier, but I had a barrier of a different kind," he wrote, describing how he wanted to grow up to become a lawyer if he could learn to speak properly.

Following graduation from McKinley High School in 1944, Ariyoshi served as an interpreter with the U.S. Army's Military Intelligence Service in Japan at the end of World War II.

After the war, Ariyoshi attended the University of Hawaii before transferring to Michigan State University, where he received a bachelor's degree in history and political science in 1949. Ariyoshi earned a law degree from the University of Michigan Law School in 1952.

Going to school on the U.S. mainland, Ariyoshi didn't feel a sense of being treated differently. "On the contrary, I enjoyed the fact that Hawaii had a reputation even then for people of different backgrounds coming together and living harmoniously," he wrote in his book.

He began practicing law in Hawaii the year after he graduated from law school. Ariyoshi withdrew from private practice and resigned various corporate directorships after he was elected lieutenant governor.

He said his decision to seek the position was influenced by a desire to break the barrier for minorities.

"The new state of Hawaii had produced United States representatives and senators of Caucasian, Chinese and Japanese ancestry, reflecting our diversity," he wrote. "But only Caucasians had been governor."

Ariyoshi's time as governor was marked by Hawaii becoming a tourist destination and a booming population. "I was convinced that neither our infrastructure nor our environment would support this rate of growth," he wrote.

In 1975, Ariyoshi and his wife, Jean Hayashi Ariyoshi, attended their first National Governor's Conference in Washington, D.C., where they were invited by President Gerald Ford to a black-tie dinner at the White House.

Jean Ariyoshi wrote in her book, "Washington Place: A First Lady's Story," that as the couple jitterbugged on the dance floor, she stood on tip-toe and whispered in his ear: "Look at the little girl from Waiawa dancing at the White House."

He replied: "And she's dancing with the kid from Kalihi."

John Waihe'e, who became Ariyoshi's lieutenant governor in 1982, went on to be elected the first governor of Native Hawaiian ancestry in 1986 with Ariyoshi's support.

In addition to his wife, Jean, Ariyoshi is survived by daughter Lynn and sons Donn and Ryozo. ■

News Briefs

TAAF's STAATUS Report Explores What It Means to Be 'Truly American'

Timed for release at the beginning of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the Asian American Foundation's sixth annual Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the U.S. found "... widespread uncertainty about the place of the nation's 25 million AAPIs, revealing stark gaps in how U.S. adults think about the impact of federal policies on Asian Americans and the growing cultural influence of AAPIs" and that "... AAPIs are anxious amid mounting federal crackdowns on immigration, trade wars, safety concerns and other pressures." One of the takeaways of the report found that 13 percent of U.S. adults believe that being white is important for being truly American. Meantime, 84 percent of AAPIs believe that being a Christian is unimportant for being truly American — more than other racial and ethnic groups. The 2026 STAATUS Index was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago on behalf of TAAF. The entire report may be viewed at tinyurl.com/4vfpca8.

Telejournalists Hirasuna, Fukuzaki Recognized for Lifetime Achievement

At its 76th annual Golden Mike Awards, the Radio and Television News Assn. of Southern California bestowed its Lifetime of Achievement Award on March 21 to multiple-award-winning KTTV reporter/anchor Susan Hirasuna, a 25-year veteran at Fox 11. Also winning awards at the RTNA event were KABC newsman David Ono in the best long-form program or documentary category for coverage of last year's Los Angeles County fires. KABC also won in the best sportscast category for its coverage of the Dodgers in Tokyo, led by Rob Fukuzaki. The Torrance, Calif.-born and Hawaii-raised sportscaster will be feted with the Los Angeles Press Club's 2026 Joseph M. Quinn Award for Lifetime Achievement at its 68th SoCal Journalism Awards Gala on June 28.

Japan Honors Former JAVA President Yamada With Order of the Rising Sun

At its April 29 Spring Conferment of Decorations on Foreign Nationals, the government of Japan awarded its Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, to former Japanese American Veterans Assn. President Gerald Hiroshi Yamada of Vienna, Va., for his "contributions to improving the social status of Japanese Americans and promoting friendship and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States." Yamada's efforts helped lead to the establishment of the annual Day of Affirmation ceremony that honors Japanese Americans who served in the military during World War II. Another Japanese American honored by the Japanese government was Hawaii's Paul Kaname Yonamine, former board chair of the U.S.-Japan Council, who received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, for "promoting friendship and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States."

Sacramento: Legislators, Leaders Call for Continued 'Stop the Hate' Funds

Assemblymember Mike Fong (AD-49), California AAPI Legislative Caucus chair, was among several politicians and community leaders who gathered on the California State Capitol stairs April 29 to call for a reauthorization of funding for the state's Stop the Hate program, which began in response to the spike in anti-Asian violence following the 2020 Covid crisis. Joining Fong were state Sens. Aisha Wahab (SD-10) and Scott Wiener (SD-11), and Assemblymembers Stephanie Nguyen (AD-10) and Ash Kalra (AD-25). Also appearing at the event were AAPI Equity Alliance Executive Director and Stop the Hate Los Angeles County Regional lead Manjusha P. Kulkarni, and Center at Sierra Health Foundation President and Stop the Hate Northern California Regional and Statewide lead Kaying Hang. Funding is set to expire June 30.

— P.C. Staff

'Songbird of Manzanar' Mary Nomura Dies

Mary Kageyama Nomura, who at 15 was incarcerated during World War II at Manzanar — one of the U.S. government's 10 War Relocation Authority Centers built to detain people of Japanese ancestry — but whose in-demand vocal skills resulted in her getting nicknamed the Songbird of Manzanar, died at her home in Huntington Beach, Calif., on April 6. She was 100.

The fifth of the six children of Tomitaro and Machi Kageyama, Nomura was born in Los Angeles. Mary's natural music talents were cultivated by her music teacher mother, who would put her daughter onstage to perform with her adult music students.

Both of her parents, however, would die before Mary was 7. Thanks to her older siblings, Frank and Fumi, however, Mary and her other siblings were able to stay together.

The parentless family's lives would become disrupted yet again, however, with America's entry into WWII, and within months, they found themselves imprisoned, along with tens of thousands of other ethnic Japanese living along the

Pacific Coast when Mary was 15.

It was at Manzanar when Nomura's vocal abilities came to the fore, when she would become an in-demand vocalist at camp functions. It was also at Manzanar where she would meet her future husband, Shiro Nomura.

Post-incarceration, they launched Shi's Fish Mart, a Japanese grocery store, one of the first Asian grocery stores in Orange County. Mary and Shi were married for 55 years.

Although she never pursued a professional singing career, Nomura was an in-demand performer at various Japanese American community events over the years. Nomura sang at 2015's Great Nisei Reunion II, accompanied by the Tex Beneke Orchestra, and at 2017's Great Nisei Reunion III.

Nomura was predeceased by her husband, Shi, and is survived by her sons, Alan (Yoshiko) and Norman (Dorothy); daughters, Mallory Saul (Tom), Lisa Ishibashi (Gerald) and Nina Williams (Larry); 12 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; sister, Mae Kakehashi; half-brother, Bill Fukawa; and many nieces and nephews. ■

PLACE A TRIBUTE

'In Memoriam' is a free listing that appears on a limited, space-available basis.

Tributes honor your loved ones with text and photos and appear in a timely manner at the rate of \$25/column inch.

CONTACT:

editorial@pacificcitizen.org or call (213) 620-1767 ext. 104

FD-929

KUBOTA

Sharing. Community. Legacy.

久保田葬儀社

T 213-749-1449
F 213-749-0265

911 Venice Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90015
www.kubotamortuary.com

福井 **FUKUI MORTUARY**

Five Generations of Experience
FD #808

707 East Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Ph. 213/626-0441
Fax 213/617-2781

Gerald Fukui
President