



Celebration of Life Matsue Watanabe

Emcee

Nancy Kitano

Slide Presentation

Dale Watanabe

Remembrances

Family & Friends

Music

Jordon Payne

Acknowledgements

Watanabe Family

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the NVC (www.nvcfoundation.org) or the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial (www.bijaema.org)

*The Watanabe Family
wishes to extend their sincere gratitude
and appreciation to our family and friends
for their kind comfort and support.*

Celebration of Life



Matsue Watanabe

JUNE 27, 1927 - JANUARY 22, 2022

1:00 pm

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

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NVC Memorial Hall

1212 S. King Street • Seattle, WA 98144

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Celebration of Life Matsue Watanabe



Matsue (Nishimori) Watanabe, 94, from Bainbridge Island, WA, passed away peacefully on January 22, 2022, of natural causes. She was born on June 27, 1927 in Port Blakely, WA, to parents Tsue and Kirohachi Nishimori, but her official birthdate was July 12, 1927. Matsue's father was a busy farmer, and it took some time for him to get to the government office to register her birth. It is believed that he either didn't understand the question or was concerned about reporting her

birth late which resulted in it being recorded as July 12th. No one seemed to know about this set of two birthdays until 2004, when she said she hoped that her third grandchild might be born on either of her birthdays. This story surprised the family since her birthday had always been celebrated in June – along with the birthdays of Tana, Naomi and Mari. When June 27, 2004 came and went, Matsue moved her hopes to a July 12th birth and was very happy that Mika accommodated.



Like many Japanese and Japanese Americans who called the West Coast home, Matsue was incarcerated at Manzanar War Relocation Center in the Mohave Desert, CA during World War II, from 1942-1944. She was 14 years old when she was evacuated and made a point of taking her own family to Manzanar when her oldest granddaughter, Tana, was 14 years old. The 110° temperatures of that summertime visit was an example of just one of the many challenges of being forced to live in the area.

From Manzanar in 1944, she moved to Illinois and graduated from Evanston High School in 1945. On Memorial Day 2017, Matsue took her two youngest granddaughters to Chicago, where Tana was living, so she could show them where she and her family lived after leaving camp. Highlights included visiting Evanston High School and the neighborhood around Wrigley Field, where her family spent time.

Matsue married Samuel Watanabe on November 9, 1952. During their 63 years of marriage, they lived in Kent and Tukwila, WA. She worked for the Highline School District for 25+ years until her retirement in 1990. Matsue was fearless and dove into new challenges, remaining active in various activities throughout her life, including swimming one mile every day at 5:30 AM for 41 years,

learning to ski at the age of 43, and taking up golf after retirement. In her late 70s, Matsue started doing triathlons and half marathons at the encouragement of family. She participated for many years (so as not to be outdone by her daughters and nieces) and enjoyed peoples' astonishment by frequently being the oldest one out there.



Matsue devoted much of her later life to her community by educating younger generations about the incarceration experience through community organizations and K-12 schools so this historic atrocity would never be repeated. She shared stories about the challenges of being evacuated as a teenager, the strain of the upheaval on her family, and the ways in which she and her friends passed the time – including putting on performances that involved tap dancing on roller skates.

While she started skiing later than most, Matsue still found ways to be involved with the ski community. She became a member of Rokka Ski Club and Ski School and

not surprisingly, gave back to the group by taking care of the membership list and editing the newsletter. Matsue kept up with the faster skiers by not stopping on the hills for breaks so that they didn't have to wait for her. People were sometimes surprised that she would be waiting at the bottom for them when they thought they were far ahead of her. She enjoyed going on weekend bus trips to ski with her kids and friends. Later, she took a ski bus mid-week and made many new friends who called themselves the Backsliders.

She made clothes for her young children, taught her teenagers how to sew their own creations, and once the kids were out of the house, advanced to sewing beautiful quilts. She enjoyed taking a diversity of classes with her friends that included cake decorating, pottery, studying Washington State history, expanding her quilting skills and learning mizuhiki, an ancient Japanese artform.

Matsue was preceded in death by her parents Tsue and Kirohachi; brother Tairoku; sisters Masako Muromoto, Kiyoko Kumagai and Sueako Yonemitsu; husband Samuel Watanabe; and daughter Naomi Kakiuchi. Matsue is survived by son Dale Watanabe (Carol Anne Yamamoto); daughter Mari Watanabe; sister Shimako Kitano; son-in-law Wayton Lim; and granddaughters Tana, Ren and Mika.

