

George Nakamura

Obituary



George Itsuo Nakamura passed away peacefully on Friday, January 24, 2014 at his home in Pearland, TX at the age of 90. George was born November 13, 1923, in Arroyo Grande, CA, the fourth of six children to Ippei and Suya Nakamura, Japanese immigrants. George was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and uncle. He lived an amazing life: one that was truly worthy of the Greatest Generation.

Although he planned to be a farmer and run the family farm in Central California, WWII radically altered his plans. He was 18 in the spring of 1942, when all persons of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast were forcibly removed from their homes, and the Nakamura family was sent to the Gila River Relocation Center located in the desolate Arizona desert, taking only what they could carry. George, his mother, brother, and four sisters were placed in one room measuring just 25 by 35 feet.

Guest Book

"Atsuko: I am so sorry to hear of your husband's death. I..."

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Determined to prove his loyalty to the country of his birth, George was one of the first 32 Japanese Americans to volunteer from the Gila River camp when the U.S. [Army](#) first sought volunteers from the "internment camps" for the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) in November 1942. During WWII, George was assigned to a top-secret U.S. military mission, the "Dixie Mission," which required his unit to live in the foothills of Yen-an, China, at Mao Tse-tung's headquarters. George's duties included deciphering Japanese transmissions, interrogating Japanese POW's and going on covert missions to gather intelligence. He was awarded the [Bronze Star](#) for going on a solo covert mission behind enemy lines to rescue a downed U.S. Army Air Corp pilot, and also received a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant for his exemplary work with the Dixie Mission. Among George's favorite stories about his time in China was the honor of dancing with Madame Mao Tse-tung during the birthday party the group threw for George's 21st birthday.

After the war, he served as a U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps officer with the U.S. Occupation Forces in Japan at General MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters for four years. He returned to the U.S. in 1949 to rejoin his family and attended Columbia University in New York City. He graduated in 1954 with a Master's Degree in International Affairs and East Asian Studies, and returned to Tokyo with the Rayovac Corporation, eventually managing all of Rayovac's operations in Asia, including Japan. During his nearly four decades of working in Japan, George made a great contribution towards the improvement of U.S.-Japan relations, especially by his passionate promotion of friendship and mutual understanding between Americans and the Japanese people.

He married Atsuko Shimizu in 1964, and they lived in Tokyo for 35 years before retiring in Hawaii. They relocated to Houston in 1999 in anticipation of the birth of their first grandchild.

In October 2010, President Obama signed into law, the bill approved by the 111th U.S. Congress, which granted the Congressional Gold Medal to George and the other Japanese American veterans who served valiantly during WWII with the MIS, the 100th Infantry Battalion, and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. As President Truman said upon welcoming the Japanese American soldiers' return in 1946: "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice. And you won."

Most recently, in honor of George's 90th birthday and to recognize his lifetime of remarkable contributions to his country, Mayor Annise Parker proclaimed November 13, 2013, as "George Itsuo Nakamura Day" in the City of Houston. George was very active in the community, and served on the boards of the [VFW](#) Pearland Post, the MIS Hawaii Club, the Tokyo American Club, the American Chamber of Commerce of Japan, and the Columbia University Alumni Association of Japan, among other organizations. He was a longtime and very active member of the Japanese American Citizens League Houston Chapter.

George had a great passion for life, and will be fondly remembered for his ever-ready dimpled smile, his loving-kindness, and his unceasing generosity. He was loved by all who knew him, and was strong to the very end. He is survived by his wife, Atsuko; daughter Aileen of Atlanta; son Gary of Pearland; son-in-law Russ Abney, and grand-daughters Saya and Mika; brother James Nakamura and his wife Tetsuko of Silver Springs, MD; sister Yoshie Noji of Long Island, NY; and six nieces and seven nephews. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to one of two organizations: The Japanese American Citizens League Houston Chapter or the Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders Center at Baylor College of Medicine.

The Nakamura family will be present to receive friends Monday, January 27, 2014 from 6:00 PM until 7:00 PM at Dettling Funeral Home, 14094 Memorial Dr., Houston, TX 77079. A Memorial Service celebrating George's life will be held that same evening at 7:00 PM in Dettling Chapel. Visit www.DettlingFuneral.com to leave online tributes.