



Toshi F. Kawanami

February 20, 1923 - April 2, 2014

On Wednesday, April 2, 2014, 91 year old Toshi F. Kawanami of San Antonio, Texas, responded to the call from Heaven by Almighty God.

Her delicate earthly body was overcome by the pancreatic cancer and infection to the point that she could no longer sustain life and she knew it was time to let go and journey to God. We are so proud of Toshi that she fought the cancer so fiercely and bravely till the bitter end.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Patricia Kawanami Patin; and her sister, Taye Sakauye.

Toshi is survived by George Masao Kawanami, her longtime husband and her devoted life companion of 62 years; her youngest daughter Teresa Kawanami; oldest daughter Gail Kawanami and son-in-law Shaukat Khan; and her beloved grandbaby bunny rabbits, Schnee and Suri. Her brother, George Fujimoto and his family and her sister Taye's family reside in California and she has many West Coast and East Coast family members on her husband's side who embraced her as one of their own family members over the past 62 years.

Toshi was born on February 20, 1923 in Fresno, California to her parents Haru Yamanaka Fujimoto and Masayoshi Fujimoto and moved to southern

California where she grew up and focused on her education spending long hours at both American school and Japanese school. She also studied piano and had aspired to be a concert pianist.

With the outbreak of WWII in 1941, Toshi and her family had 48 hours to evacuate to the Pomona Assembly Center before traveling to Heart Mountain internment camp in a desolate area of Wyoming where she worked as a dental hygienist. Toshi and her parents and siblings resided at the camp from 1941 through 1944.

After the war, they moved to a farm in El Monte, California before Toshi and her family moved to downtown Los Angeles, near Temple and Olive Streets. Later Toshi and her family moved to Sun Valley in southern California around 1949.

When she returned to the West Coast, she felt so appreciative to be employed by the Whittakers at a time when many Japanese were facing discrimination and could not find work. It was at the Whittaker's home around 1948 where she was doing domestic work that she met the intelligent, hardworking and very charming, handsome George Masao Kawanami who was working as a handyman and was about to become the love of her life.

Around the same time, she was able to find rewarding and exciting work with the Dalzell Hatfield Art Gallery at the Ambassador Hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

After she saw that George was a "keeper" and this marked a serious lifelong relationship, she quickly made huge changes to shift from an aspiring concert pianist and her love and passion of the arts and the artists associated with the Dalzell Hatfield Art Gallery to becoming a full-time military officer's wife, devoted life companion to George and stay at home mother for her three

daughters, Gail, Patricia and Teresa.

Toshi held the fort down while her husband was constantly on TDY assignments lasting for a few days to a year at a time. Throughout her husband's military career, the family had to pack up and move every few years.

When her husband retired after 29 years of service in 1980, they set their roots in San Antonio, Texas and became involved with the Order of Eastern Star-Alamo Heights Chapter #734 in 1982 where she served as Worthy Matron alongside of George who was the Worthy Patron in 1992-1993.

She was passionately involved with Japanese flower arranging with Ikebana International since 1979 where she served as President in 1985-1987.

She and her husband were quite involved with PVA which advocates and provides support for our paralyzed veterans.

As her husband became encumbered with more health challenges, Toshi served as George's primary caregiver until December of 2011.

During the past two years, Toshi began having health challenges. Yet she was determined to make a complete recovery from her multi-lobe pneumonia in 2012 and pancreatic cancer in 2013 to now.

During the last two years of her life, she fell in love with her beloved bunny rabbits, Schnee and Suri, who were a magnificent source of joy, pride and healing for her where Schnee frequently comforted and entertained Toshi in her hospital rooms and bunny Suri came for visits. Toshi and her sweet bunny boy Schnee made appearances on the television news in San Antonio, and

Texas newspapers in Port Lavaca and Victoria, Texas.

She was committed to life and to healing and a source of inspiration for all of us. Toshi certainly has deserved her wings and entrance to the gates of Heaven.

SERVICES

Come and celebrate the life of Toshi Kawanami! Visitation will be on Monday, April 21, 2014 from 7:00 to 8:30pm at MISSION PARK FUNERAL CHAPELS NORTH, 3401 Cherry Ridge Drive, San Antonio, TX 78230.

The Visitation will continue on Tuesday, April 22, 2014 beginning at 12:00 noon at UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH UPC, 300 Bushnell, San Antonio, Texas followed by the Service at 1:00pm at UPC.

In lieu of flowers, Toshi had requested that donations be made to one of her favorite charities: IKEBANA INTERNATIONAL –SAN ANTONIO CHAPTER c/o Tera Kouba 29319 Summit Ridge Drive, Fair Oaks Ranch, TX 78015, or OES ALAMO HEIGHTS CHAPTER #734 519 Alameos, San Antonio, TX 78212 or UNIVERSITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MEMORIAL FUND 300 Bushnell, San Antonio, TX 78212.