

IRA SHIMASAKI - An Obituary

Goodbye Ira



I met Ira Shimasaki in the 1950s when we lived near Washington, DC. He was the auto body man at the local Pontiac dealer and he taught me how to do minor repairs on my car. He was very active with the Washington, DC Chapter of the JACL and was the Arlington Cemetery chair for a number of years when he was in charge of the services that were held for the JA soldiers buried in Arlington. Each year, we would help him with decorating each and every JA soldier graves with flowers and take part in the services that his committee would sponsor. In later years, in retirement, he became a South Bay Chapter JACL member and renewing our friendship, would write me .commenting on my newsletter and give me encouragement. Although he was low key, he will be missed. Goodbye Ira, ed mitoma

A donation to the South Bay JACL newsletter was received from Ira's family for the amount of \$600.00 in honor of the his memory. The Chapter thanks the Shimasaki family for the tremendous memorial donation.

IRA SHIMASAKI

Born Isao Shimasaki on November 13, 1916 in Lindsay CA. Ira passed away on Dec 10, 2007 at the age of 91 in Torrance, CA.

On Dec 7, 1941, 25 years old Ira was flying through the skies of Central California working on his solo hours to complete his private pilot's license. After Pearl Harbor, he was never able to finish the program.

In the spring of 1942, Ira and his family were forced to leave their home under Executive Order 9066. They were sent to the Fresno Assembly Center and then relocated to the internment camp in Jerome, Arkansas.

In April of 1943, Ira left the camp, finding work at a nursery in Monroe, Michigan. As he wrote his granddaughter Dana, "It was cold and hard work digging up plants all day. On the plus side, that is where I met your grandma Gladys whom I consider one of the nicest persons on this earth. When I married her it was the best thing that ever happened to me." Ira and Gladys married in March 1944.

In September 1944, Ira was drafted into the Army. He did his basic training in Tyler, Texas and was sent to Ft Meade in Maryland before he was sent overseas to Germany in the winter of 1945 as an MP.

Upon returning to the U.S. in 1946, Ira lived and worked in Bethesda, MD, just outside of Washington, DC as foremen of an auto body shop specializing in Pontiacs and Rolls Royces. This is where he and Gladys raised their children, Don, Sandi and Susan.

For 30 years, from 1948 until he relocated to Southern Calif. in 1979, Ira was the Permanent Chair of the JACL Arlington Cemetery Committee, organizing and presenting yearly services on behalf of all Nisei soldiers and especially those buried in Arlington Cemetery, including members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Ira worked closely with Mike Masaoka and others in the JACL to conduct the only non-governmental, non-veteran group memorial services permitted to be held on the grounds of Arlington Cemetery. He also served many years as the Eastern District Governor.

In 1979, Ira and Gladys moved to North Hollywood, CA where they owned and operated a gift store in Burbank for 5 years. They then moved to Torrance, where they owned and operated a children's clothing store for 6 years.

Ira is survived by six of his brothers and sisters, Atsuko Kusuda, Fred, Sam, Rinko Enosaki, Walt and Joe; his children Don, Sandi (Bill) Kitzes, and Susan (Don) Liebson; and grandchildren Justin, Dana, Kevin, Brian and Jason. Ira's beloved wife Gladys (Onoye) passed away 7 years ago and his brother Tom passed away in 1989.