



Miyoko (Miyo) Tabata

September 5, 1920 - April 5, 2021

Miyoko (Miyo) Tabata was born September 5, 1920 in Oxnard, CA. She and her two brothers attended local schools and graduated from Oxnard High School.

Before having children, her father owned and operated the Blue Bird Cafe on Main Street in Ventura before eventually selling it to open a grocery/soda fountain store on Oxnard Boulevard in Oxnard. The three children helped run the store.

Miyo's future husband, Joe Tabata, and she became friends through the Buddhist Church, he in Santa Barbara, and Miyo in Oxnard. Joe asked her for a date many times after they initially met but Miyo was more interested in playing basketball and softball with her girlfriends. However, prior to her departure to Hiroshima, they did go on a few dates, which would turn out to be their last for many years.

When Miyo and her two brothers finished Oxnard High School, her father sold the grocery store and the family temporarily relocated to Hiroshima, Japan. The relocation was to be just long enough for her father to sell off the farm lands he had purchased over the years. The plan was to return to Oxnard and re-purchase the grocery store as the family missed Oxnard.

In 1939, Miyo was accepted into the prestigious Yasuda Girls School after taking tutor lessons for a year, mostly to efficiently learn to speak and write Japanese to help her gain entrance to the school. In school, Miyo was happy to meet a couple of girls from stateside. When alone together, they spoke

English, and when approached by other girls or instructors, they switched to speaking in Japanese. Miyo and her family had dual citizenship, so they were closely watched by the Government.

Unfortunately, their lives changed forever in 1945 when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Miyo and her mother were at home at the time and several miles away from the epicenter. They felt the concussion, felt the heat and witnessed the mushroom. A day after the bombing, Miyo was required by the Japanese authorities to go into Hiroshima with others for two days to try and find survivors. What she saw in those two days she rarely recounted until her later years. The Santa Barbara News Press once did a feature article on Miyo years ago when they found out that she was a Hiroshima survivor living in Santa Barbara. Especially, an American citizen who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time in 1945 and lived to talk about it.

Miyo always said that the worst part of their experience in Japan was that the Japanese government took the family properties away from her father prior to the bombing. The land was given to the farmers to grow rice for Japan's war efforts. After Hiroshima was destroyed, the banks were crumbled and the bank records along with the bank employees were gone. The family suffered economically for many years.

After Miyo's departure to Hiroshima, Joe Tabata was drafted into the U.S. Army and was a Tech Sergeant in the celebrated 442 Regimental Combat Team and fought in Italy. Joe and Miyo stayed in contact by letter, until the Hiroshima bombing, then lost contact with each other for three years. Neither not knowing if the other had survived the war or the bombing. After several years of not knowing, the Red Cross finally connected the two of them through their final letters and they knew they were still alive.

Miyo was not cleared to leave Japan until 1948 and did not have the money to buy a ship ticket. Joe waited nine years to see Miyo again and was only able to send her enough money for her ticket and not her parents. It was very difficult for Miyo to leave her parents in Japan. After she arrived in San Francisco, Joe picked her up and they married shortly afterwards. Their first

child, JoAnn, was born in 1949

Years after her three children were grown and on their own, Miyo joined the work force for many years. She managed the Milpas Street Taco Bell for 15 years, worked for Technik, and Robinson's Department store. In her later years, she volunteered at Vista Del Monte Retirement community where Peggy Buchanan operated a fitness studio. She continued long relationships with many of the friends she made while in the work force.

Miyo was physically active in her later years. She loved Jazzercise and was part of Peggy Buchanan's Jazzercise program for 25 years and attended classes into her early 90's. Miyo's zest for healthy living and a positive spirit was infectious to those who knew her.

Miyo and Joe lived the remainder of their lives in Santa Barbara. She is survived by her daughter, JoAnn (Yasuhiro) and sons George (Linda) and David (Lee). Due to Covid-19, there will be no services.

Tribute Wall

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“ I came across the obituary for Miyo when looking for one for my uncle. I worked for Miyo at the Taco Bell for almost 2 years while in high school. I then enlisted in the Army and went on to a career in law enforcement in Utah and then college professor, now retired.

Miyo was an incredible influence on my life, my character and my work ethic. I often shared stories of my experiences at the Taco Bell with my students as an example of how a seemingly nominal job can have a profound effect on a person's character and life all because of a person (Miyo) who was exemplary as a role model. She was a mentor, motivator and luminary to me and others who worked for her.

Reading Miyo's obituary stirred emotions of fondness, admiration and deep gratitude for all that she did for me. I share my heartfelt condolences to her loved ones.

*Alvaro "Al" Avila, Jr.
Atwater, CA*

Al Avila - April 16, 2021 at 01:08 PM