

Kimi (Taguchi) Hara

1916 – 2007

Kimi Hara Memorial Scholarship
Twin Cities JACL

Kimi (Taguchi) Hara, was born in Green Lake, WA (now incorporated into Seattle) in 1916. She was the oldest of five children born to Seiki and Matsuye Taguchi, Japanese immigrant truck farmers in Seattle. Her father died when she was 14, and her family lost the farm when Japanese citizens were interned at the start of World War II.

At age 14, Kimi worked at home and as a housekeeper in private residences until all of her siblings were in school. She attended Swedish Hospital (Seattle) School of Nursing (1940) and started her BA at the University of Washington until the start of WWII. She was rejected by the Army Nurse Corps but, as an alternative to internment, was allowed to move to St. Mary's Hospital (Rochester, MN) to fill a need for nurses.

Over career, she held supervisory positions at St. Mary's Hospital, at Fort Snelling, Maternity and Fairview hospitals, taught nursing at St. Olaf College and was a maternal-child health consultant to the Minnesota Health Department.

Kimi was a member of the State Board of Nursing and, beginning in 1963, its associate executive director for 17 years. She administered scholarships, licensing exams and disciplinary investigations, many for chemical abuse. "Nurses all over the state kind of looked upon her as the influence over their careers," and called her for advice, said Terry O'Brien, who was the board's lawyer for a decade. In disciplinary proceedings, Hara was firm but wanted good nurses returned to work after they reached sobriety, and she was so compassionate that nurses would come up after hearings to thank her, O'Brien said. "I can't tell you the influence she had on quality and standards ... and compassion. She left an imprint."

Kimi was married to Sam Hara and had 1 son, Thomas. Sam Hara, a U.S. Army combat veteran of World War II, died in 1983. Much of her volunteering was informal. She and her late husband, Sam, hosted many Japanese health professionals and once held a wedding on their lawn at Lake Independence in Medina for a young Japanese woman whose parents couldn't make the trip.

She drove all over the state, and her son, Thomas, said her volunteer work teaching emergency childbirth skills to the State Patrol probably saved her from some speeding tickets.

She also was a longtime volunteer for the Japanese American Citizens League and a founding member of the Normandale Japanese Garden in Bloomington. Former Vice President Walter Mondale presented Hara with a Japan America Society service award, calling her "a wonderful example of the best of the human spirit." Kimi was a Sunday school teacher at Gethsemane Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, and worked on a national uniform nurse licensing examination and inspected nursing practices in Okinawa for the World Health Organization.

Kimi was a friend to everyone. She had a strength of character showing perseverance and hard work. When she originally applied to a nursing school in Seattle, Kimi was advised to go into pharmacy, where a Japanese face would "not be seen" by the patients. She ignored that "advice", went on to Swedish and had a long and successful career in nursing.