

Susan Emi (Tsuchiya) Matsumoto **1954 – 1980**

Susan E. Matsumoto Memorial Scholarship
Twin Cities JACL

Susan Emi (Tsuchiya) Matsumoto was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1954 to Frank and Helen Tsuchiya. At age 4 in 1958, Susan and Family moved from Minneapolis to St. Louis Park, Minnesota and lived there until she married David Matsumoto in 1978. Susan had two brothers, Frank and Todd Tsuchiya.

Susan graduated from St. Louis Park High School in 1972 as one of the students in the top academic honors group. She graduated from the University of Minnesota College of Education in 1976 with very high distinction.

After graduation, there were very few teaching jobs anywhere in the State of Minnesota. There was one opening in the Bloomington, MN school district and with hundreds of applications submitted, Susan got the job. She had written her whole application in beautiful calligraphy attracting the judges' attention. The judges saw this, checked her grades, and she got the job. The position was at Park Elementary School in Bloomington. At the time of her death, she was a second grade teacher at Parkview School in Rosemount, Minnesota.

In many scrapbooks and countless papers show how she printed every program in beautiful calligraphy for all gatherings such as JACL, Buddhist Church programs and many other organizations who wanted her expertise. She never refused. She was always willing to help.

Susie was an accomplished musician; she played the piano, clarinet, and saxophone. At her high school graduation, after her lung surgery, her solo performance included five different instruments. Everyone could not believe she "blew" into these five instruments. She was always in first chair playing her clarinet for the Concert Band. She gave piano lessons to the children in the neighborhood throughout her college career to help pay for her tuition. She appeared many times on TV or at different parties to play her koto, the same koto that her Grandmother Tsuchiya played when she was a young girl.

Susan was a true Buddhist. She belonged to the Twin Cities Buddhist Association and taught Sunday School. All the children loved her as she made it fun to study the teachings of the Buddha, by performing plays, craft work, and songs. When she married, her husband David was a Christian. He marveled at the way Susan believed and started to believe it also. After her death, David studied further and became a Buddhist minister to pass the teachings onto others. He is currently President of the Institute for Buddhist Studies, Director of the Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies, and past resident minister of the Berkeley Buddhist Temple.

This is truly Susan; Who suffered through many recurrences of her illness but never complained about it. Her illness began at age 10 but she never gave up and believed she was going to live each day and carry on the work she believed in.

The Susan Matsumoto Scholarship Fund was started by Sally Sudo who taught her piano lessons when she was a very young girl. She could see Susie's potential in learning not only piano but other things as she went to her house each week. This scholarship has been in existence since her death in 1980. Most of the recipients have been high school graduates and it seems most were girls who resemble Susan's capabilities in academics, music, art, and community service. Many recipients have followed Susan's footsteps and have succeeded in their future endeavors.