

## **DR. YOSHIYE TOGASAKI**

*January 3, 1904 - December 4, 1999*

Dr. Yoshiye Togasaki learned about compassion and civil rights from her parents. When she was growing up in San Francisco, her home was a "Grand Central Station and clearing house" for Japanese immigrants. Her mother, Shige, helped young women find families to live with and taught her children to volunteer their services to the sick and needy in the community. Her father, Kikumatsu, a business man formed an organization to help Japanese men start their own businesses and work against racism towards Asians.

Dr. Togasaki devoted her life to the principle that one's greatest responsibility is to improve the welfare of the human race. Her personal and professional accomplishments are testimony to that principle. She graduated from Lowell High School in San Francisco and received her B.A. in Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley. She was the first Japanese American woman to work in a public health laboratory in California.

Appearing before congressional hearings in San Francisco and Washington, D. C. in support of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, she stated that "the important thing is that the Act declared that no person would, in the future, be incarcerated without due cause."

Dr. Togasaki herself was sent to Manzanar Relocation Camp just as she was starting her medical practice in Los Angeles. Although she had earned her medical degree from Johns Hopkins and a Masters degree in Public Health from Harvard, she states her real public health training was acquired in the WWII Relocation Camps. In Manzanar and in Tule Lake, she demanded the segregation of tuberculosis patients from the general population. Stating that the camps were a "real public health nightmare", she fought for proper sewage systems, food sanitation, clean water, formulae for babies and much needed vaccines.

After her release from camp, she served as a medical officer with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and worked to improve health conditions at five displaced persons camps in Southern Italy.

After the War, she worked for the California State Health Department as a consultant in Maternal and Child Health and Crippled Children's Service. She became Assistant Health Officer at the Contra Costa County Health Department in 1951 and later was promoted to and served as Chief of the Division of Preventive Medical Services and Deputy Health Officer until her retirement in 1972.

Dr. Yoshiye Togasaki was a lifelong activist with American Civil Liberties Union and the Japanese American Citizens League. She was a Life Member and Past President of Soroptimist International of Concord. She was past president of the Contra Costa Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. She was a founding member of the Japanese Women Alumnae of the University of California at Berkeley.

Among the numerous distinguished awards she received were: The California Association of Mental Health Award for her outstanding achievements in the field of mental health and mental retardation; National Service Award from the National JACL; Planned Parenthood's Award for Maternal and Child Health Care; California Parent Teacher's Association Award; the "Distinguished Woman of the Year" award from the American Association of University Women; the Soroptimist International of Diablo Valley "Very Important Woman" award for her community service; Community Service Awards from Contra Costa Chapter JACL 1966-72 and 1986; Community Service Award from the Japanese Cultural Community Center of Northern California in 1986; Woman of Achievement awards from Soroptimist International of Concord, the District and the Region in 1987; the 1989 Lifelong Achievement Award from the Concord Human Relations Commission; the Humanitarian of the Year Award at the 1990 Contra Costa County Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration; and the 1991 Outstanding Alumna Award from the Japanese Women Alumnae of University of California at Berkeley.

In November 1993, the American Women's Medical Association honored Dr. Togasaki with the Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell Medal for 1993, their most prestigious award, for her achievements in medicine as a woman physician. In December 1993, the California Alumni Association presented her with the California Alumni Citation Award.