



Lillian Sadako Tokunaga

April 22, 1924 - April 14, 2026

Lillian Sadako Tokunaga April 22, 1924-April 14, 2026

Lillian Sadako Tokunaga, beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend to many passed away on April 14, 2026, just eight days before what would have been her 102nd birthday. She lived a life of extraordinary depth - one that carried her through some of the most pivotal moments of the twentieth century - and through it all, she met every chapter with grace, resilience, and an unwavering belief in the goodness of people.

Born April 22, 1924, in Seattle, Washington, to Manichi and Chiyono Yamaguchi, Lillian was raised in a Japanese-American family steeped in tradition. At the age of 14, as was customary in many Japanese families of the time, she was sent to Japan to learn the language and customs of her heritage. When the war broke out in 1940, she found herself unable to return home, and spent the years that followed living in Hiroshima. In one of history's most striking twists of fate, Lillian was sent away from the city on the morning of August 6, 1945 - the day the atomic bomb was dropped. She survived. Many of her classmates did not. She carried the weight of that day quietly and with deep reverence for those she lost.

She went on to graduate from high school in Hiroshima and built her footing in a shattered world, working first as a translator and then as a nanny for the family of an American Air Force officer. In 1947, she returned to Seattle by

ship - home at last after nearly a decade away.

It was at a church event in Spokane that Lillian met Harold Tokunaga, a farmer from the Quincy area. They married in 1948, and together they built a life rooted in the rich soil of the Columbia Basin. Alongside Harold and his brother Joe, Lillian farmed in Moses Lake - raising sugar beets, potatoes, and hay and raising children with the same steady hands. For over 78 years, Moses Lake was her home. When Harold passed from cancer in 1987, she carried on with the same quiet strength that had defined her life from the beginning.

Lillian was a woman of community and connection. She was a proud member of the Nisei Women's Club, the Spokane Buddhist Church, the Moses Lake Sister City Club and the Moses Lake Senior Center. She bowled on a local team, shared the golf course with her dear friend Kiyoko Osumi, and traveled the world alongside her sisters. Her kitchen was a place of love - she cooked from scratch with equal fluency in American and traditional Japanese dishes - and her crocheted washcloths and potholders found their way into homes of any who were lucky enough to receive one. Twice a year, family gathered around the card tables for a rousing game of "31", tradition as cherished as any holiday.

What those who knew Lillian will remember most, perhaps, is her spirit. She believed the best in every person she met - without exception without condition. Even in her final weeks, when asked if she was in pain, she would simply say she was fine. That was Lillian.

The family wishes to extend heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Andrea Carter and Dr. Curtis Papenfuss, whose exceptional and compassionate care meant so much to Lillian - she always looked forward to her appointments with them. Deep thanks also to the staff at Monroe House Senior Living and most

recently to Crystal Springs Adult Family Home and Volina Puyu, who treated Lillian not as a resident, but as a friend.

Lillian is survived by her daughter and son: Gail Pinkerton (Bruce) of Moses Lake, and Ron Tokunaga, Wenatchee, her granddaughters Kelly Kartes (Luke), Seattle and Kia Erhos (Colton) of Spokane, her great granddaughters Avery Erhos and Emerson Kartes, her sisters Ets Yamada, Oak Point, Texas, Yone Kawaguchi of Seattle and sister-in-law Fudge Tokunaga of Moses Lake. Also a large extended family of nieces and nephews and their families. She was preceded in death by her husband Harold, her son Larry, parents and her sisters Michiko Yamaguchi and Sue Hayashi.

A private family service will be held in July.

Tribute Wall



“ I'm sorry for your loss, Gail... Your mom must have been an amazing person... Please find some comfort knowing that someday soon, we will all be happily reunited with our loved ones...

Sincerely,
Greg Cochran



Gregory Cochran & Family - June 03 at 05:29 AM

TA

“ Trina Alfaro lit a candle in memory of Lillian Tokunaga



Trina Alfaro - April 26 at 11:30 PM

KT

“ Mrs. Tokunaga became my friend when I visited my mother at Monroe House. She lived next-door and would come over and talk with me and sometimes invite me to her apartment. She immediately felt like a Friend. She also taught me how to crochet hot pads. I always look forward to visiting her when I visited my mother. Thank you, Mrs. Tokunaga for your friendship and kindness.



Kami Thompson - April 23 at 12:15 AM

WS

“ Wendy S. lit a candle in memory of Lillian Sadako Tokunaga



Wendy S. - April 17 at 10:36 PM

BH

“ I will miss Lillian. We went to many casinos in the area. We caccompanied Lillian who passed a few years ago. Bye Lillian. We will meat again.

Barb Harris - April 17 at 06:59 PM