



Betty Kato Morita

September 11, 1933 - December 5, 2025

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Betty Kato Morita, passed away peacefully in her sleep at home on December 5th, 2025, at the age of 92. She was born on September 11th, 1933, in Seattle, Washington, to Naotaro and Hideko Kato.

Betty often described her childhood as joyful. In 1939, her father opened a small grocery store, and she and her sister Dorry would “sneak” Twinkies and candy while their mother helped customers—memories she treasured throughout her life.

Everything changed in 1942 when Executive Order 9066 forced Japanese Americans into incarceration camps. The family sold nearly everything and could bring only what they could carry. Betty and her sister, still too young to grasp the situation, told neighbors excitedly they were going to “camp,” imagining something more like a YMCA trip. On May 1, 1942, the store closed and the family was sent to Minidoka, Idaho.

In 1943, sponsored by a Chicago family, they were allowed to leave camp and begin a new life in the Midwest. Betty attended Goudy Elementary School, Senn High School, and Drake University on scholarship, majoring in art with

an English minor. She substitute-taught throughout Chicago before earning her Master of Arts at the University of Illinois at Champaign, supporting herself by working as a resident advisor. She taught art at Amundsen and Von Steuben High Schools until Mark was born in 1961.

A defining chapter of Betty's life began on New Year's Eve 1957, when she went on her first date with Mototsugu M. Morita Jr. They became engaged in September 1958 and were married in August 1959, building a marriage that lasted more than 65 years—grounded in love, partnership, shared values, and humor.

Together they raised their four children—Mark, Julie, Paul, and David—on Hood Avenue, in the home they purchased in 1968 and lived in for nearly 60 years until they both passed away this year.

As her children grew older, Betty returned to her creative passions, studying ceramics, collage, stained glass, Ikebana, microcomputing, and computer graphics at Northeastern Illinois University and University of Illinois in Chicago. Her curiosity was lifelong, and she sought out beauty and learning wherever she could.

Betty devoted herself to her church as a Sunday School teacher, chair of the Administrative Board and Staff/Parish Committee, and writer of communications for church activities. She was equally dedicated to her community—serving as PTA chair, chair of the RIF (Reading Is Fundamental) program, member of Hayt School's Local School Council, secretary of the Edgewater Glen Association, and holding the distinction of being the last Nisei member of the Japanese American Service Committee Board.

When Junior's sister Flora retired from managing his dental practice, Betty stepped in—on the condition that he invest in a computer. She went on to fully

modernize and computerize the office, as we shared in Dad's obituary: their strengths complemented each other, and each made the other's work better.

Betty also took great pride in the home and garden she and Junior cultivated together—one of the most admired in the neighborhood and a frequent standout in local garden walks.

Betty was preceded in death by her beloved husband Mototsugu M. Morita Jr., her siblings Walter (and his wife Anna) and Dorothy ("Dorry") (and her husband Toshimasa Hosoda), and her parents.

Betty is survived by her children:

- Mark Morita, wife Lisa, and their son Jackson
- Julie Morita, husband Bill Trick, and grandchildren Megan and Jake
- Paul Morita, wife Marin
- David Morita

Above all, Betty loved her family. She encouraged each of us, believed in us, and created a home rooted in warmth, humor, creativity, and care.

In an autobiography written at age 61, she reflected on what she hoped to pass down:

"What I want to hand down... would not be of a material nature, but rather: freedom, responsibility, priority for education, intellectual curiosity, love of the beautiful, creativity in all aspects of life, kindness to all, no fear of hard work, respect for cultural heritage and patriotism to birth country, a religious faith that is acted upon, and laughter and much love."

Betty is reunited with Dad—sixty-six years after their first New Year's Eve date

and six decades after building their life together on Hood Avenue. Although our hearts are heavy, we are profoundly grateful for the many wonderful years we shared with her.

A memorial service to celebrate Mom's life is planned for Saturday May 2nd, at Ravenswood Fellowship Church in Chicago. Visitation 11 am-12 pm, Service 12-1 pm, and reception to follow.

For those who are not able to attend in person, we're glad to be able to offer a Zoom option so you can still be part of the service: Join the Zoom Service (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82375149980>)

Meeting ID: 823 7514 9980

(Alternate ID: 8157 6290 322)

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) or Ravenswood Fellowship Church.

<https://www.ravenswoodfellowshipumc.org/give>

<https://jasc-chicago.org/donate/>

—Mark, Julie, Paul, and David

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering in Church

MAY 2. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Ravenswood Fellowship, United Methodist Church
4511 N Hermitage Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
<https://www.ravenswoodfellowshipumc.org/>

Memorial Service

MAY 2. 12:00 PM (CT)

Ravenswood Fellowship, United Methodist Church
4511 N Hermitage Ave
Chicago, IL 60640
<https://www.ravenswoodfellowshipumc.org/>

Service time to be determined

Tribute Wall



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of Betty Kato Morita.*



April 29 at 01:29 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Betty Kato Morita.

April 29 at 01:29 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Betty Kato Morita.

February 12 at 01:14 PM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Betty Kato Morita.*



February 12 at 01:14 PM

DW

“ I enjoyed your Mom's gentle sense of humor especially when she noted your Dad concern about her safety to get home after a night meeting. Also, along with Larry Ebert, we all shared 9/11 birthdays. Sense of humor, intellect, interesting ideas - what a wonderful heritage for all of you.

Dawn Wyman - December 23, 2025 at 10:18 PM