

Yuba College Foundation
2000 ALUMNI OF THE YEAR AWARD
Dr. S. Tom Taketa

Presented at the May 2000 graduation ceremony of Yuba College (Marysville). Dr. Taketa was introduced by Yuba College Foundation Board President, Dr. Charles Clement (Fall, 1999 to Fall, 2001).

Yuba College Foundation's Alumni of the Year award for the Year 2000 goes to Alumnus Dr. Tom Taketa. He will, additionally, receive his Yuba College diploma tonight.

With a Stanford Ph.D. in Mammalian Physiology, a wall-full of additional degrees and awards, and a distinguished career behind him, one might ask why Tom today so values the opportunity to at last receive his associate's degree. Well, first of all, Tom prides himself in being an American. He was raised here, was educated in the Marysville School System and went on to attain regional recognition as a forward on Yuba College's basketball teams of 1941 and 1942. He was only 5'6" tall when he did so . . . our first lesson perhaps. But more importantly, I would say, is the fact that Tom just plain missed the graduation ceremony back in '42.

He and many other Japanese-American citizens were, in fact, under curfew, waiting for their removal to what was then known as relocation camps. His loyalty, like that of nearly all Japanese-American citizens, had been called to question. And like thousands of these citizens, he attained his release by volunteering to support the U.S. military in the war effort against Japan and Germany. So Tom now wants to put closure to this unfortunate piece of his, and our, history. And we WILL give him his diploma.

We often hear that back in those days it was easy to go to college. But Dr. Taketa, like a surprisingly large number of students from that era, faced severe challenges in earning his Stanford degrees. Many of you can identify with this. In fact, Tom worked full-time during the entirety of each program, receiving no outside support whatsoever. And characteristic, perhaps, of his road to success, he spent six years of his evenings, weekends, holidays and personal leave time researching and writing his doctoral dissertation.

Since then Tom has attained stellar credentials. He has achieved recognition at the U.S. Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory in San Francisco, at NASA's Ames Research Center, and at U.C. Berkeley's Lawrence Radiation Laboratory. While serving in these roles, he conducted research on the impact of x-ray technology that helped the medical profession understand the parameters within which x-rays could be used safely on human beings. In a totally unrelated area, he also literally wrote the book on life support specifications for conducting life science research in outer space. At the same time, Tom played a leading role for the U.S. government in the conduct of hearings regarding World War II's relocation camps.

Parallel to Tom's professional career has been his passion for community service. While known for his formation of numerous youth basketball leagues, Tom has additionally served on over 85 boards, panels and service committees ranging from local to national in significance. His awards and affiliations have been similarly astounding, his name appearing in the American Men of Science, in Who's Who, and in the Dictionary of International Biography - to name just a few.

Of course the most recent, and prestigious, among his legion of awards has been his election to the Yuba College Athletic Hall of Fame this past winter.

Tom has been married to Terrie Otsubo for 51 years. He has three sons and a daughter, all of whom have attained distinction in their respective professions. Tom and Terrie now have five grandchildren as well.

We appreciate Dr. Taketa's accomplishments and know that you will enjoy his remarks. We are pleased, as well, to award him tonight with his Yuba College diploma - Tom Taketa, Class of '42.