

# Nelson Takeo Akagi

*June 27, 1923 ~ September 19, 2020*

Nelson Takeo Akagi passed away peacefully surrounded by family in his home on Saturday, September 19, 2020, in Murray, Utah at the age of 97.

Nelson was born on June 27, 1923, in Lindsay, California to Otoemon and Masano Takehara Akagi, where he grew up on the family farm. He attended Lindsay High School, lettering in football, basketball, track and tennis. He was working toward a major in electrical engineering and a minor in mechanical engineering at California Polytechnic State University when Pearl Harbor was attacked, and he was immediately sent home. WWII turned his family's lives upside down. They were stripped of their rights, classified 4C enemy aliens, and forced to sell their properties for pennies on the dollar. Their choice was to relocate to an internment camp or a sugar beet farm in Parker, Idaho. To avoid internment, they chose to work on the farms of the U&I Sugar Company in Parker, Idaho. Nelson never returned to California Polytechnic State University, until years later, in 2010, when he was awarded an Honorary Bachelor of Humane Letters. In 1943, when Japanese-Americans were able to serve in the military, Nelson enlisted. He was 19 years old. He served as a machine gunner and forward observer. He belonged to the highly-decorated all Japanese-American "Go For Broke" 442nd Regimental Combat Team, nicknamed "The Purple Heart Battalion." He was honorably discharged in 1946. In 2011, he was awarded the prestigious Congressional Gold Medal and in 2020, the highest French decoration, the French Legion of Honor. During WWII, his family moved to Utah to farm. Upon returning from the war, Nelson resumed his education at the University of Utah. He married Atsuko Noda in the Salt Lake Temple in 1969, and they had three children: Douglas, Paul, and Jeanette. When Jeanette was still an infant, Atsuko succumbed to pulmonary hypertension, a fatal lung disease. Nelson married Lois Kilbourn Bennett in 1974. A year later, he received a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship as a machinist from the State of Utah. Nelson doubled as a fruit farmer on the family farm in Draper, Utah, and as a machinist at Hercules (now ATK), where he worked on intercontinental ballistic missiles, retiring in 1987. Nelson continued to farm until 1995 when the family decided to develop the land. In 1997, Nelson and LaVar Christensen were presented the Developers of the Year Award by the City of Draper for their development of Akagi Farms.

Nelson was a Christian all his life. He converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in 1965. He was an early member of the Japanese Dai Ichi Branch where he served in many capacities including ward missionary, executive secretary, and in the High Priests Group leadership. He eagerly volunteered for humanitarian service opportunities, was a faithful home teacher, and served as an ordinance worker in the Salt Lake Temple for over 25 years. Nelson spent countless hours educating students and teachers at all levels, in addition to sharing his experiences with museums, newspapers, and news outlets of the tragedies of discrimination and prejudice. He belonged to the American Legion Honor Guard in Draper and the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 6 Honor Guard, and he enjoyed serving his fellow veterans by providing military burial services for their families.

Nelson dearly loved his family and enjoyed fishing, skiing, watching football, and basketball. He also enjoyed watching fireworks, going to parades and festivals, attending 442 reunions, and traveling. His favorite travel destination was Disneyland. He went as often as he could with his family. Nelson left a legacy of hard work and devotion to God, family, and country.

Nelson is survived by his sisters Betty and Marie, his children Doug (Jani), Jeanette (Grant) Spencer, Craig Bennett, Scott (Robyn) Bennett, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his parents, as well as his siblings Utaka, Tamotsu, Isamu, Fusako, Harry, and May, his wives Atsuko and Lois, and his sons Paul, David Bennett, and Tracy Bennett.

The family would like to express our appreciation to the medical staff of the Veterans Hospital and Community Nursing Services for their care of Nelson during his final days. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Go For Broke National Education Center or the Japanese American National Museum are appreciated.

https://www.goforbroke.org/
http://www.janm.org/

A viewing will be held Monday, September 28, 2020, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. The funeral service will be held Tuesday, September 29, 2020, from 11:00 to 12:00 PM, followed by a military burial. While the viewing and burial are open to all who wish to attend, the funeral services will be by invitation only due to COVID-19 restrictions capping indoor attendance. We ask all others who wish to attend the funeral services to do so using the Zoom link provided. We ask that mask adherence and social distancing measures be observed during the services. All services will be held at Larkin Sunset Gardens at 1950 East 10600 South, Sandy, Utah.

Zoom Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89542129482