

# Alive!



## REMEMBERING JOANNIE MUKAI ~ 1941-2010 ~

*Joannie Mukai, Harbor Dept. pioneer and Club Board Member, helped recreate the City Employees Club in 2002. Her biography, tributes and photos begin on page 6.*

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SEE PAGE 13.

HARBOR

# In Memory of Joannie

*Joannie Mukai was a pioneer with the Port and a great supporter and architect of the Club.*



The Club is mourning the loss of Joannie Mukai, legendary City Employee and Club Insurance Board Member, who early on saw the power of what the Club could be and was instrumental in supporting the staff in its creation.

Yoshiko "Joannie" Mukai died March 27 in Los Angeles. She was 68.

Her death was "a shock to all of us," said John Hawkins, Club CEO. "In addition to the work she did during her great career with the Port, she loved the Club, and loved being a Club Member.

"She was more than a board member for us, she was a good friend and big supporter of ours. We will miss her very much."

Joannie was on the Club's Insurance Board – comprised of current and past City Employees – when the Los Angeles City Employees Association (LACEA) decided in 2002 to adopt a new all-inclusive customer service model. That's when the City Employees Club was born.

She worked tirelessly with Club staff to create the new concept in employee associations, and supported every big move the new Club made – creating a strong newspaper and then Website; opening a stand-alone store and service center downtown, closer to where Club Members work; instituting ClubFest, which she attended every year; and negotiating to become the first entity as far as we know to license the City seal.

"She was there for so many things we've done for our Club Members," said Brian Trent, Club Chief

Financial Officer. "She loved that we gave check refunds almost every year to those who have our Club life insurance product."

"The Club extends its deepest sympathy to Joannie's family and friends, and all those she touched," John Hawkins said. "Rest in peace."

The Board of Harbor Commissioners dedicated their meeting April 15 to her memory. A celebration of her life was held April 8 at Green Hills Memorial Park. She is survived by her sister, Yoshiye Mukai, and many loving relatives and friends.

## THE CLUB SCHOLARSHIP ... IN HER HONOR

Club names its scholarship program after Joannie Mukai.

In the memory of the late Joannie Mukai, former Harbor pioneer and Club Insurance Board Member, the Club announces that it has renamed its long-running and popular Club Scholarship program the Joannie Mukai Club Scholarship Program.

"We feel it's a perfect way to honor all that

Joannie has done for the Club, and for City Employees," said John Hawkins, Club CEO, in announcing the renaming. "She believed in education and training, and she believed in preparing people for success. That's what the Club Scholarships are all about, and we're delighted to name them after her.

"Our Club Products Manager, Arlene Herrero, came up with the idea to name them after Joannie, and it's a perfect way to keep her memory alive."

Applications for the 2010 Joannie Mukai Club Scholarships are now available. See the story on page 13.



# In Memory of Joannie



## THE LIFE OF JOANNIE MUKAI

Joannie had been the Port's Director of Construction and Maintenance Division from 1992 until her retirement two years ago. She was one of the first female division heads in the Harbor Department.

Joannie had a more-than-40-year career with the City, working her way up from Clerk Typist. While working full-time, Joannie earned her Bachelor of science and Master of business administration degrees from Pepperdine University.

She also received certificates in Engineering Management for Construction from UCLA, Seaport Management from USC, and Executive Management and Terminal Management from the American Association of Port Authorities. She was a member of the Society of Port Engineers and was a charter member of the Japanese-American National Museum.

For more than 20 years, and up until the time of her death, Joannie served on the Board of the Los Angeles City Employees Association and served on the LA Employees Association's Insurance Services board.

Joannie was known for her dedication to her work, coming to work at 5 a.m. and frequently putting in 12-hour days.

To show their respect and affection for Joannie, nearly 100 Harbor Department employees attended her funeral. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a procession of Construction and Maintenance Division vehicles drove slowly past her gravesite in tribute.

*The Club thanks Robert Henry for his contributions to this article.*



At the Harbor Perfect Attendance luncheon, 2005: From left: Pink Lit, Civil Engineering Associate, 18 years; Boyd Bostre, Architect, 28 years, Club Member; Joannie Mukai, Director of Construction & Maintenance, Club Board Member; and Ed Little, Sr. Roofer, 9 years.



Receiving a team honor for recycling, 2006: Harbor, back row, from left: Russ Gallivan, Cecil Verdugo. Front: Shilpa Gupta and Joannie Mukai.



Joannie Mukai at a Harbor retirement party for Cliff Okamoto, 2006.



At Joannie's memorial service April 8.



At the Harbor retirement party for Cliff Okamoto, 2006: From left: Joannie Mukai, Director of Construction and Maintenance, Club Board Member; Cliff Okamoto, Retiree, Club Member; Dave Chrisman, Supervisor, Club Member; Clifford's wife, Beatrice; daughter, Sue; and son-in-law, Eric.



At Joannie's memorial service April 8.



At Joannie's memorial service April 8.

## JOANNIE MUKAI

1941-2010

# IN TRIBUTE

Upon hearing the news of Joannie's death, many Club Members and others who knew her sent their tributes to be printed in *Alive!* Here are their thoughts.

### To a Dear Sister of Mine,

You may be gone from my sight but never my memories. Your presence in my life was indeed a gift to be held in my heart forever. Thank you for everything. I will miss you.

— **Karen Mukai, sister of Yoshiko "Joannie" Mukai**

### Lost a Dear Friend

When I opened my e-mail last night I could not believe the news. I was very close to Joannie for the last 10 years, and her wisdom was a source of inspiration to me. She was always concerned for the wellbeing of others and, in particular, for the family. She looked after her mother with special care and later after her sister, who was ill.

I met Joannie at the Club when I first joined many years ago, and I always found her opinions full of wisdom and to the point. Joannie was the voice that kept us all calm during some of difficult issues at the Club; she was instrumental in the establishment of the Club and the *Alive!* newspaper, and she was always present at the annual ClubFest.

Joannie will be missed by all us at the Club, but in particular by me; I lost a dear friend.

— **Rose Hyland, Club Insurance Services Board Member**

### Commitment to Family

I will always remember Joannie's smile, so warm and friendly. I especially admired her commitment to her family and The Club. Joannie attended every ClubFest, doing her part to celebrate with Club Members and their families, ensuring everyone had a good time. We are all saddened by Joannie's passing; however, we can take comfort in knowing that she will be forever "Alive!" in our hearts and memories. I am blessed and privileged to have been associated with such a fine woman. Joannie Mukai, you will be missed but never forgotten.

— **David Muraoka, Chairman, Club Board**

### Wonderful, Kind

We were deeply saddened to hear about Joannie's passing. She was a wonderful, kind, caring, and thoughtful person. She never said negative about anybody. May she rest in peace.

— **Bill and Ruby Christiansen**

### Consummate Professional

During my tenure at the Port of Los Angeles, I worked in the Construction and Maintenance Division. I first met Joannie Mukai in 1980, when she served as Administrative Assistant to Roy J. Cootes, Director of Port C&M. Subsequently, she was appointed Director of Construction and Maintenance, where I had the pleasure of being her secretary for the last 15 years of my career prior to retirement in 2007.

As the first female appointed to the largest division in the Port of Los Angeles, she prided herself in the positive image of her division by personally attending all meetings, functions and assemblies. The Port of Los Angeles and her job meant everything to Joannie; she would often forego vacations and personal time off in order to ensure projects and assignments were completed or progressed on schedule. Additionally, she believed and supported those traditions that promoted camaraderie and esprit d'corps, such as the annual C&M Christmas breakfast.

In spite of her busy workload and responsibilities, Joannie would remember and take the time to greet subordinates on their birthdays, baby and wedding showers and other accomplishments, as well as attend

perfect-attendance assemblies, secretary's day lunches, and funerals. To say that Joannie Mukai loved her job in Construction and Maintenance is an understatement. She devoted herself to the mission of the Port of Los Angeles until her last day prior to her retirement, and always spoke positively about it.

I am proud to say that I knew Joannie; I worked alongside her, and considered her a friend.

— **Emma E. Gonzalez, Port Employee, Retired**

### Gracious and Generous

I was shocked and saddened by Joannie's passing. She was always gracious and generous with her time and thoughts, and she will be missed terribly. I won't forget the empathy she showed me as a newly appointed board member, which I'm sure she never thought twice about.

— **Michael Leighton, General Services, Club Board Member**

### Dedicated City Worker

Joannie Mukai hired me in 1983. I worked with her for 25 years until the day she retired. She became a mentor and guided me on how to become the best City worker I can be. She was the most dedicated City worker, sometimes working 12-hour days, but still was able

direct the Construction and Maintenance Division to be one of the best and greatest places to work. She will be missed – the City lost one of the best.

— **Holly Carlson, Accounting Clerk II, Construction and Maintenance, Port of Los Angeles**

### Highest Traditions of Public Service

I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Joannie Mukai. I have had the honor and privilege of knowing Joannie since the early 1970s, when she was Chief of Staff for Councilman Don Lorenzen and I was a new Administrative Analyst in the Office of the City Administrative Officer. She later came to the City Administrative Office as an Executive Secretary at the conclusion Councilman Lorenzen's term of office and moved on to the Port of Los Angeles as a Principal Administrative Assistant in Construction and Maintenance, later moving up to Director of that Division.

She was a great friend, accomplished colleague and an engaging "lunch buddy" for more than 30 years. It was my great pleasure to recommend Joannie to the Board of Control of the Los Angeles City Employees Club, where she served with distinction over a 20-year period. She was one of the very finest and most productive City



At the Harbor holiday party, 2004: From left: Joannie Mukai, Director of Port Construction & Maintenance, Club Board Member; Roy Cootes, Retired Director of Port Construction & Maintenance, Retired in 1992.



At the Harbor Perfect Attendance luncheon, 2006: From right, from left: George Ivcevic, Drafting Tech, Club Member; Dr. Paz Eilat, Western Medical; Laura Stange, Western Medical; Joannie Mukai, Construction & Maintenance Director, Club Board Member; and Frank Albers, Sr. Management Analyst II.



At ClubFest 2005: Club Board Members Rose Hyland and Joannie Mukai help out with the Club T-shirts.

JOANNIE MUKAI  
~ 1941-2010 ~

In  
Memory of  
Joannie

*Joannie, you are going to be missed by so many people,  
not only the staff of the City Employees Club but by all  
the employees you mentored at the Port.*

– John Hawkins, President & CEO,  
City Employees Club



At ClubFest 2008: From left: Club Board Members Joannie Mukai and Rose Hyland with Club CEO John Hawkins.

*Joannie will be missed by all us at the Club, but in particular by me;  
I lost a dear friend.*

– Rose Hyland,  
Club Insurance Services Board Member

Employees that I knew during my City career. Her legacy is exemplary of the very highest traditions of public service. I feel quite honored to have known and served with such a fine human being. The world is a better place for her personal and professional endeavors during the 40 years of her service to the City of Los Angeles.

– David T. Peterson, former LACEA and LACEA  
Insurance Services Board Member

#### Impressed With Her Knowledge

I met with Joannie at lunch to interview her [for possible induction onto the LACEA Board], and I was very impressed with her knowledge and dedication and immediately thought, "A-ha, we need her." As you can see, everything worked out for the best. I remember how she would bring her mom to our retreats, and I always called her mom "Mother Mukai." Those were the days. I will always cherish Joannie's friendship and miss her.

– Marilyn Holley,  
Club Insurance Services Board Member

#### Kind and Considerate

It was with a great sense of loss when I heard of Joannie's death. My heart is truly saddened. Joannie was more than just a wonderful person; she was always so kind and considerate, and we always welcomed seeing her at every opportunity.

Her passing will not only leave a void in our lives, but in the hearts of all those who knew her. She was a jewel among us, always giving us a shining example of caring, goodwill and kindness. She will forever remain within our hearts.

– Vas Singh, Club Board Member

#### Intensity, Constant Cheerfulness

I hired Joannie in January 1979 as an Administrative Asst. in the Construction and Maintenance Division at the Harbor Dept. She was in the midst of obtaining an MBA at Pepperdine University at night.

She quickly showed tremendous skills and knowledge, and she was promoted to Sr. Administrative Assistant and Principal Administrative Assistant. In 1981,

I promoted her to Assistant Director of Port Construction and Maintenance.

In 1992 when I retired as Director of Port Construction and Maintenance, the Division was staffed at that time with two Assistant Directors of Port Construction and Maintenance, one of which was Joannie. The Division at that time consisted of some 285 employees. Upon my retirement in July 1992, Joannie was appointed Director of the Division.

Sometime in 1993, the other Assistant resigned and left City service. For the remainder of Joannie's career, Port management failed to replace any of the Assistant positions. Joannie continued to work her usual 12-hour day without complaint or grievance.

During her tenure as the Director of the Division, she had to adjust to the management style of three different Executive Directors.

In my entire 31 years with the City, I have never seen someone with so much intensity, so much attention to detail, [and] so willing to assist and consul subordinate employees. And above all, [I remember] her constant cheerfulness in achieving the Division's prime mission, which is service to the Port's tenants while preserving the value of Port lands, facilities and equipment, valued in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

– Roy J. Cootes, Joannie's former supervisor

#### True Friend

The news of Joannie's passing was received with great shock and sadness. It was great pleasure for me to work with Joannie on both Boards of the Club for the past 18 years. Joannie will be greatly missed by all who knew her. The City family and Club have truly lost a valuable Board Member and a true friend.

– Andrew J. Virzi Jr., DWP,  
Club Insurance Services Board Member

Joannie, you are going to be missed by so many people, not only the staff of the City Employees Club but by all the employees you mentored at the Port. Your dedication and relentless pursuit of giving back to City Employees was instrumental in the creation of what we now know as The Club. Personally, I'm really going to miss your early arrivals to our Board Meetings, where you and I were able to catch up on current events and City politics, not to mention all the fun we had at the Club's special events.

Thank you, Joannie, for giving me the best gift of all: eternal friendship.

– John Hawkins, President & CEO,  
City Employees Club

Hearing the news about Joannie's passing was a shock that rocked me. It was only a few weeks before that I had seen Joannie, and she seemed her usual, vibrant self. And perhaps this is the way she wanted to have all of us remember her...vibrant. That is the word that comes to mind when I think of her as a person, as a Board Member and as City Employee. She commanded so much respect and did so without asking for it. She was at the same time very caring and dedicated to the betterment of the City of L.A. and most of all cared and wanted the best for City Employees. I proclaim that we celebrate her life and remember the impact she has made to the history of this great city and to the City Employees Club of Los Angeles.

– Robert Larios, Club Director of Operations

#### Thanks for Tributes

I want to thank you all for the tributes for my sister. I am touched by everyone's love and kindness. Thank you.

– Karen Mukai, sister of Yoshiko "Joannie" Mukai