

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In Memoriam: Harry Higaki

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The industry has lost another icon: Harumi “Harry” Higaki, founder of Bay City Flower Company, one of the most well-respected potted plant nurseries of the 20th century. Harry was 101 when he passed away peacefully at his home in Hillsborough, California, on December 16.

Harry was part of both American history and the floriculture industry history. A second-generation nurseryman in Redwood City, California, when World War II broke out, Harry and his family were victims of Executive Order 9066, which ordered the evacuations of all persons deemed a threat to national security from the West Coast to relocation centers further inland. He was forced to leave his nursery, and he and his family were relocated to Kimberly, Idaho. But, thankfully, a Bay-area grower leased the family’s greenhouses, and continued growing and harvesting their existing crops (cut flowers for the San Francisco flower market), and the bank collected rent on behalf of the family, allowing the business to survive.

In Idaho, Harry was drafted to the Military Intelligence Service and sent to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, for language training. In 1947, he was honorably discharged as a U.S. Army Sergeant after serving in the Counter Intelligence Corps in Kobe, Japan. That’s where he met and married the late Sachiko Higaki in 1949. Harry and Sachiko were married for 67 years.

After the war, Harry expanded the family nursery, eventually moving to Half Moon Bay around 1960 and growing the business into one of the country’s premier potted plant growers. His son, Harrison, took over the reins in 1986, and the fourth generation, Lisa, Marc and Michael Higaki also came into the family business. Sadly, the family closed the operation in 2019 after 109 years in business.

Harry earned many accolades during his long career. In 1994, Harry was named Flower Marketer of the Year by the Produce Marketing Association. He also was named Farmer of the Year (1990 and 1998) by the San Mateo County Farm Bureau and Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce. In 2011, he received the Nisei Soldiers of World War II Congressional Gold Medal in belated recognition of his service to the United States. **GT**