

K. Patrick and Lily Okura: Biographical Information

The late K. Patrick and late Lily Okura were long time supporters of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. Patrick Okura graduated from UCLA, with a B.A. in 1933 and an M.A. in Psychology in 1935. He was the first Asian American at UCLA to receive a varsity letter in baseball. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the UCLA Alumni Association.

Patrick and Lily were incarcerated during World War II. Afterwards, they were both recruited by Father Flannagan at Boys' Town in Nebraska, where they worked for many years. Patrick was then recruited by Dr. Bertram Brown, head of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), to become his Executive Assistant. In his position at NIMH, Patrick was an advocate for research and training on Asian American mental health issues and helped to found the Asian American Psychologists Association, an official organization of the American Psychological Association.

Lily Okura was a significant community leader with the Japanese American Citizens League and other organizations. Lily was one of the first employees of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. She was also the subject of a number of photos taken by legendary photographer Toyo Miyatake before World War II, and is featured in the documentary on Miyatake, titled "Infinite Shades of Gray".

Patrick and Lily have established a foundation to provide opportunities for mid-career mental health practitioners and researchers interested in Asian American health issues to meet with NIMH officials in Washington, DC. They donated their personal papers to the Asian American Studies Center and UCLA's Special Collections Department. Together, they established the Patrick and Lily Okura Endowment for Asian American Mental Health Research, which will provide research support for UCLA faculty and students, in perpetuity.

The Okuras were married for 63 years. Patrick passed away on January 30, 2005, and Lily died on June 14, 2005.