Celebrating 100th Birthday With Okinawan Studies Endowment at UH Manoa

BY JEANNIE PINPIN – The Nakasone family celebrated Tsuruko Nakasone’s 100th birthday by creating the Matsuro and Tsuruko Nakasone Endowment Fund at the Center for Okinawan Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

This fund established with a $36,000 gift, also honors the memory of their late father Matsuro Nakasone, and will provide students with the opportunity to travel outside of Hawaii to study or undertake research in Okinawa-related subjects. This is the first Okinawan Studies endowment fund established by a family and the second endowed fund since the Center was formed two years ago.

“On the occasion of our mother’s 100th birthday, we wanted to honor our parents in a meaningful way,” said Bob Nakasone. “Because of their strong interest in family, education and Okinawa, we decided to establish an endowment at the Center for Okinawan Studies, which supports students who have an academic focus or interest in Okinawan Studies. It is our way of saying thank you to our parents.”

Born on Maui, Tsuruko Tamanaha spent most of her childhood in Okinawa. She later returned to the islands and married Matsuro, who was born in Okinawa and had immigrated to Hawaii at age seventeen. The young Matsuro started out as a plantation field worker and then became a cook at a Lanai plantation. He later moved the family to Honolulu where he started a small “hot dog stand” on Hotel Street. Together, the couple raised five sons and one daughter. As with many poor immigrant families, life in the beginning was difficult but with tremendous effort, determination and hard work, Matsuro and Tsuruko were able to create a successful small business and send all six children to college.

The Center for Okinawan Studies (COS) was established at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa on July 1, 2008. It is the first center of its kind outside Japan. Its mission is to promote a deeper understanding of the peoples and cultures of the Ryukyus and Okinawa by supporting studies about the history, culture, environment, societies and diaspora of the Okinawan/Ryukyuan peoples.

For more information on how you can support the Center for Okinawan Studies, please contact Harriet Cintron at (808) 956-3594 or harriet.cintron@uhfoundation.org. You can also make a gift online at http://www.uhfoundation.org/GiveToOkinawanStudies

The University of Hawaii Foundation, a nonprofit organization, raises private funds to support the University of Hawaii System. Our mission is to unite our donors’ passions with the University of Hawaii’s aspirations to benefit the people of Hawaii and beyond. We do this by raising private philanthropic support, managing private investments and nurturing donor and alumni relationships. http://www.uhfoundation.org
The University of Hawaii at Manoa serves approximately 20,000 students pursuing more than 225 different degrees. Coming from every Hawaiian island, every state in the nation, and more than 100 countries, UH Mānoa students matriculate in an enriching environment for the global exchange of ideas. http://manoa.hawaii.edu

Submitted by the University of Hawaii Foundation.

© 2010 Hawaii Reporter. All Rights Reserved.