

Casper (WY) Star- Tribune

Mary Ujifusa

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, N.Y. - Former Worland resident Mary Ujifusa, 86, died April 15, 2007, of complications following hip surgery at the Westchester Medical Center near New York City.

She was born Mary Okugawa, the daughter of a machinist on the Santa Fe Railroad, on April 9, 1921, in La Junta, Colo.

On Dec. 1, 1940, she married Tom Ujifusa, whose family had been working on the railroad and farming in the Rairden/Durkee area north of Worland since 1904.

Her children, Grant and Susan, were born in the old Worland hospital in 1942 and 1946.

During the 1950s and 1960s, she was a PTA leader, taught Sunday school at the Worland Methodist church and was an especially devoted 4-H Club leader.

In 1986, she and her husband moved to Westchester County, N.Y., to

be near the families of their two children.

The valedictorian of her class, she never had a chance to go to college. She made sure that her children did. Her son, Grant, governor of Boys State, graduated from Harvard and her daughter, Susan, governor of Girls State, graduated from Wellesley.

Mary was even more proud of her grandchildren's academic achievements. One graduated from Annapolis, another from Berkeley, and two from Harvard.

Upon her death, Ryoza Kato, the ambassador from Japan to the United States, wrote, "I mourn the passing of Mary Ujifusa. She was an immensely proud Japanese American and committed to equal rights for all Americans. A woman of fierce academic and practical intelligence, she had great impact on her son, Grant. And so it is my feeling that without her, redress for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II might not have enjoyed the success that it did."

Survivors include her children, a younger brother of Osaka, Japan; three younger sisters in the Denver area; five grandchildren, including an adopted child still in high school and one great-grandchild.

May 1, 2007