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## Patsy Sumie Saiki

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Educator and author of books on Japanese Americans in Hawai'i.

Patsy Sumie Saiki was born on March 12, 1915, the daughter of Shukichi and Chise Okada Kawatachi from Hiroshima, Japan, who were among the first group of Japanese contract workers to arrive in the Islands. After her parents completed their three-year contract, they saved enough money and purchased a fifty-acre homestead in Āhualoa on the Island of Hawai'i. When Saiki was fifteen, she went to McKinley High School (/McKinley\_High\_School/) on O'ahu. However, before graduating, she returned to the Big Island to tend to her ailing mother who eventually died of cancer. Saiki married Kiyoto Saiki and before returning to school had four children. Despite her family responsibilities, Saiki took only three years to graduate from the University of Hawai'i with a degree in education in 1954. As an undergraduate, however, she won the Charles Eugene Banks creative writing contest twice in 1952 and 1953 in an unprecedented accomplishment. Saiki continued her education and eventually earned her master's degree in education from the University of Hawai'i in 1959. In 1967, she earned a doctorate from Columbia University specializing in curriculum design. She was awarded a *Wall Street Journal* summer fellowship to the University of Wisconsin in 1960. The next year, the *Wall Street Journal* recognized her as one of the top United States journalism teachers. From 1955 to 1959, Saiki taught English and journalism at Stevenson Middle School. In 1960, she worked as a journalism instructor at McKinley High School and eventually became a Department of Education (DOE) administrator and program specialist. Saiki retired from the DOE in 1975 and embarked upon a writing career that focused on the experiences of Japanese Americans in the Islands.

From 1979 to 1981, Saiki served as the research chair for the Honolulu Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (/Japanese\_American\_Citizens\_League/) . In this capacity, she interviewed more than 100 Japanese Americans in Hawai'i who were incarcerated during World War II and wrote about their experiences in her book, *Ganbare: An Example of Japanese Spirit* . This was the first, and for many years the only book on internment in Hawai'i. Earlier she had written a collection of short narratives titled *Sachie, A Daughter of Hawaii* and later authored *Japanese Women in Hawaii: The First 100 Years* and *Early Japanese Immigrants in Hawaii* . Scholar Amy W.S. Lee noted Saiki's contribution to recording the experiences of Issei (/Issei/) and Nisei (/Nisei/) in Hawai'i, among whom were her parents:

Through the documentation and re-telling of these individual stories of the immigrants, Saiki provides a vivid picture of the dreams and fears, joy, and hardship this group shared; the vast range of characters appearing in the stories, each with his or her own life and thoughts, makes the story collection insightful explorations of humanity. <sup>[1]</sup>

As the author of multiple books, Saiki was also involved in the Japanese Women's Society and was the editor of United Japanese Society of Hawai'i's *Renkyo no ayumi: United Japanese Society of Hawaii 40th Anniversary Publication* .

As a result of her contributions to preserving the history of Hawai'i's Japanese immigrants and fostering goodwill between America and Japan, the Japanese government awarded her The Order of the Sacred Treasure, Apricot in 1996. Earlier in 1981, she was honored with the Jefferson Award and the University of Hawai'i Alumni Association distinguished service award in 1992. In 1999, Saiki established an award in the English department at the University

<b>Name</b>	Patsy Sumie Saiki
<b>Born</b>	March 15 1915
<b>Died</b>	December 2 2005
<b>Birth Location</b>	Hawai'i
<b>Generational Identifier</b>	Nisei (/Nisei/)

of Hawai'i at Mānoa for the best short fiction work. On December 2, 2005, Saiki passed away at the age of 90, preceded in death by her husband Kiyoto Saiki who was also recognized an Order of Sacred Treasure. She left behind four children—Mae, Kathleen, Ken, and Dennis—as well as seven grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

**Authored by Kelli Y. Nakamura (/Kelli\_Y.\_Nakamura/), University of Hawai'i**

## For More Information

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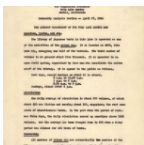
## Footnotes

1. ↑ Guiyou Huang, ed, *Asian American Short Story Writers* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), 270.

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