

Watanabe-Kimura Apartments Dedication

Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, TX

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10:30 AM

By

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Good morning, Hardin-Simmons Family!

I am Kathryn Kimura Mlsna, the oldest daughter of Grace Watanabe and Eugene Kimura, and I am honored to be here on behalf of the Watanabe and Kimura families. My sister Eugenie, my brother Alan, and I wish that our parents could be here in person, but we know they are with us, from above, on this magnificent autumn morning.

Proverbs 24, verses 3 and 4 tell us that – “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

We ask God to protect this beautiful student residence . . .

- by maintaining a strong foundation of “bricks and mortar”, and
- by blessing the reason for which the apartments were conceived. Built to be more than a place of repose at the end of the day, the apartments are a place of reflection, of personal growth, and the nurturing of lifelong friendships.
- In that way, the Watanabe-Kimura Apartments will support the mission of the university -- to provide an education enlightened by Christian faith and values.

Grace loved HARDIN-SIMMONS.

- The university is the alma mater of her father Rev. Paul Yorishige Watanabe. Immigrating from Japan to the United States in 1903, he graduated from Simmons College and pursued graduate studies at Yale University in 1919. He became a renowned Baptist pastor in the Los Angeles area, an inspiring orator across the country, and a popular speaker on this campus.
- Grace was intensely proud of the exceptional Christian education she received and was deeply grateful for the kindness shown to her during her time at Hardin-Simmons.
 - Following her father's efforts to reach out to Hardin-Simmons friends while literally on his deathbed, his two oldest daughters, Grace and Jessie, were able to leave the WWII "internment camp" . . . located in the Arizona desert where their family and others were incarcerated . . . to relocate to Abilene, having received the approval of the military, the city, its high school, this university, and the offer of private homes where they worked for room and board.
 - Given the longstanding anti-Japanese feelings in the United States, especially during that time, it was a story of the faith and the courage of the Hardin-Simmons community and the Watanabe family.
 - Not able to begin her homework until 9:00 each night when her chores were completed, and rising early in the morning to begin her chores again, Grace nonetheless excelled academically, earning the Julius Olsen Medal for achieving the highest grade-point average for each of her four years at

Hardin-Simmons, and graduating summa cum laude in 1946 with the Minter Medal.

- But my mother's education extended beyond the classroom. She learned to catch and pluck uncooperative chickens who, I am certain, had other plans for the evening, and to catch runaway horses – skills the city girl from Los Angeles had not yet acquired, but that contributed to her full Hardin-Simmons experience.

Education is a cornerstone of our family. Our father, who earned his Ph.D. in pharmacology at the University of Chicago, repeatedly told my siblings and me that a good education is invaluable because it gives us choices. We might enjoy working a job that did not require a college education, but it would be our choice, not the consequence of a lack of a diploma. A good education, he reminded us, is something that can never be taken away.

It was always assumed that we would go to college. Graduate degrees were optional, but encouraged. Following our parents' examples, we collected a lot of letters – J.D., B.S./R.N., and M.D. – and have passed down to our children and theirs, our belief in the immense power of education.

Years of tuition payments were their gifts to us. We hope we were able to make our parents proud of who we became.

As a former university trustee, a past president of my alumni association, and a longtime volunteer, I am witness to some serious

dedication to my alma mater in the Midwest. Even in this context, though, I was always impressed by the intensity of my mother's feelings for Hardin-Simmons. They were evident in how she spoke of her time in Abilene, how her life was impacted, and how she and my father supported the mission of the university.

My mother and father would have been so humbled, yet so proud to be honored by today's dedication of the Watanabe-Kimura Apartments. Our family hopes that the students who are fortunate to call it home will have the rich experiences, the strong foundation for a Christian life, and the lifelong commitment to Hardin-Simmons that my parents demonstrated.

Influenced by her father and Hardin-Simmons, Grace developed a strong Christian faith that manifested itself in every aspect of her life. She was an accomplished pianist; her favorite music came from her hymnal. Her closest friends were members of the church. She was a tireless volunteer. She attended Sunday services and taught Sunday school. She wrote beautiful prayers for our family gatherings, and she raised her children in the faith. Most importantly, she lived as she believed God would want her to live.

It has been said that "Life is not measured by the number of breaths one takes, but by the moments that take one's breath away." And so, as we celebrate lives and legacies on this glorious day, know that the Hardin-Simmons family has truly left our family breathless.

Thank you.