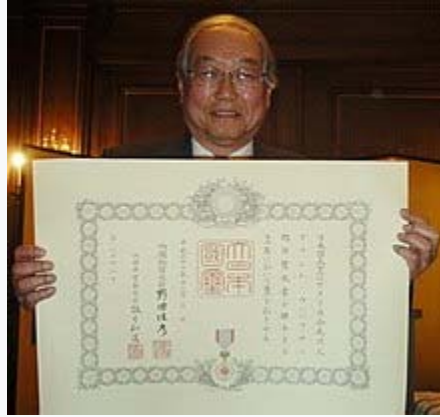


Grant Ujifusa

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



On January 26, 2012, at the office of the Consulate General of Japan in New York, Grant Ujifusa, Redress Strategy Chair of the Japanese American Citizens League, was knighted by the Government of Japan for reversing President Ronald Reagan's opposition to HR 442, the Japanese American redress bill that secured an apology and monetary reparations for loyal Americans who were forced into prison camps during World War II.

Grant Ujifusa was born on January 4, 1942, in [Worland, Wyoming](#), and grew up with his younger sister Susan on a sugar beet farm not far from that agreeable and friendly small town, one very much still located about 65 miles southeast of [Heart Mountain](#), perhaps the most famous of the camps where Japanese Americans were imprisoned during World War II. Grant's grandfather, Ujifusa Shuichi, came to northern Wyoming in 1905 to help to lay track for the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. After the work was completed, Shuichi decided to shovel and level farmland out of the local erose desert and raise a family, including Grant's father Tom, in an isolated geological basin surrounded by the Rocky Mountains and three sister ranges. Through the arid basin flowed the Big Horn River from which water was diverted to irrigate Shuichi's farm.

So the Ujifusa family, a 1000 miles from the West Coast, was not sent to a camp during World War II. Nor was the family of Grant's mother Mary Takaiyo, whose father Okugawa Jukichi settled in [La Junta, Colorado](#), and found work as a machinist on the Santa Fe Railroad. Mary had the best grades in the La Junta High School Class of 1939, and was named the valedictorian. The teachers and the kids really liked her, but the administrators and the school board said, "No jap will speak at our commencement." And so she didn't.

But Mary could speak, read, and write Japanese with complete fluency, because she had attended a Japanese language school, established by local immigrants, for 3 months every summer for 12 years. Mary was an exceptional student year round, but her family was too poor to send her to college. And so a marriage was arranged for the eldest child in the Okugawa family, a marriage that became a love match between Mary and Tom.

One of Grant's earliest memories was formed when eight Heart Mountain internees were given leave to help with Grandpa's 1944 sugar beet harvest. The men lived with the family in the big farm house. Grant, the toddler, grew especially close to internee Joe Furuta of Tacoma, and would lock the fingers of his small hands around the back of Mr. Furuta's neck and, hanging like a monkey, be carried from place to place. Joe Furuta was a lovely, gentle man, imprisoned of course at Heart Mountain because he was surely a spy and a saboteur.

When Grant was about 9, Grandpa Shuichi advised his grandson, called Masa in a three generation household, that "You have to be careful in life because you come from a dumb family." "Why would you say something like that, Grandpa?" the once bi-lingual Masa asked. "Because," Grandpa said, "I voluntarily chose to settle in a part of the world to which 11,000 people were involuntarily removed. Think about it."

Grandpa, besides raising sugar beets, ran a big herd of cattle on the open range outside of Worland, ridin' and ropin' just like the other local cowboys, with one of them saying years later, "You know that Japanese man out there with us once. Pretty good little wrangler." Not bad for the descendant of Japanese peasant farmers who lived for generations in a country where only the upper, but not the lower, class of samurai could get near a horse.

In 1938 or 1939, the Japanese Consul General in San Francisco journeyed all the way to Worland to offer Grandpa 10,000 acres in Manchuria to raise open range beef cattle. Not many Japanese, maybe none, knew how to do that. To be a rancher on horseback like those around him in the surrounding mountains was farmer Grandpa's dream. The family was packed and ready to go when Grandpa at the last minute changed his mind and decided to stay in Wyoming.



Then in 1951, they struck oil on Grandpa's farm. After which Grandpa said, "Actually, people say I am very smart, but I am something much better than that, which is lucky, Karma lucky."

Married to the [Issei](#) cowboy was gentle Grandma Yae, ever caring, a Buddhist saint, a bodhisattva, if ever there was one in the state of Wyoming. Susan was close to Grandma, and Tom, completely devoted to his family, was more like his mother than his father. Tom died in 2002. After Mary died in 2007, Ambassador Ryoza Kato said of her, "Mary was a woman of

fierce academic and practical intelligence, and a woman who was immensely proud of her Japanese heritage. I mourn her passing."

As a 149-pound high school senior, Grant was an all-league quarterback of a state championship football team—ranked number one in the state in 1959, the same year he was elected Governor of Boys State. The year before Grant Ujifusa and the Worland Warriors defeated Dick Cheney and the Casper Mustangs by the score of 39 to 6. The Warriors had 450 kids in their high school; the Mustangs, 1800. Thirty years later, Grant persuaded Congressman Cheney to vote "yea" on HR 442.

Grant left Wyoming to receive an AB with honors in 1965 from [Harvard University](#), where he was an editor of [The Harvard Crimson](#), and an ABT from [Brown University](#) in American History and Literature in 1969. Some twelve years later [Min Yasui](#) and [Mike Masaoka](#) recruited Ujifusa to lead the [Japanese American Citizens League](#) in its successful effort to pass and enact HR 442, the Japanese American redress bill. Signed into law by Ronald Reagan on August 10, 1988, the legislation provided for an apology and monetary reparations from the federal government for Franklin Roosevelt's imprisonment of loyal Americans during World War II.^[1]

From 1982 to 1992, Grant served as JACL's volunteer Redress Strategy Chair, but he did nothing but watch [Spark Matsunaga](#) work three intense years to put together a 69-vote, filibuster-proof majority for Senate passage of the redress bill in the spring of 1988. Why the bipartisan support? One reason: Sparky called in all his chits owed to him over the years from fellow senators. Another reason: Sparky's colleagues just loved him, someone who lived the Aloha understanding of life. Senate success, [Daniel Inouye](#) said, was ten parts Matsunaga and one part the other Senator from Hawaii. This means no parts for a Senator from Wyoming and a one-time Boy Scout who voted to strip all of the monetary reparations out of the bill, saying on the Senate floor that "the money sticks in my craw" and recently in the *Washington Post* that the money in the bill made the apology "insincere." The long ago Boy Scout from Wyoming cannot name a single Senator he persuaded to vote for Sparky's bill. And so, Sparky's legacy should be returned to him.

In 1990, Grant worked with Senator Inouye and with Janet Hale in the first Bush Administration's [Office of Management and Budget](#) to make the monetary reparations authorized in the bill an entitlement expenditure like Social Security, and so not subject to the vagaries of the annual appropriations process.

In 2012, Grant was knighted by the Government of Japan for his work done in 1987 and 1988 that reversed [Ronald Reagan's](#) longstanding opposition to HR 442.

While lobbying the redress bill, Grant also worked as a Senior Editor of general interest books at [Random House](#), earlier at [Houghton Mifflin](#) and later at [Macmillan](#). Writers with whom he worked included [Andrew Grove](#), Senator [Sam Ervin](#), Governor [Tom Kean](#), [Lester Thurow](#), [Robert Eisner](#), [Kevin Phillips](#), [Julian Jaynes](#), [Yuji Ichioka](#), and [Daniel Yergin](#).

Ujifusa was, as well, the founding editor and longtime co-author of *The Almanac of American Politics*, called by [Tim Russert](#) and [George Will](#) "the bible of American politics." The 1600-page, pre-internet, biennial volume provided description and analysis, using words and numbers, for each of the 535 members of the House and the Senate and for all of the 535 constituencies represented in Congress. This meant *The Almanac*, a National Book Award finalist in 1973, twice encompassed the entire geographical expanse of the country and its people. Ujifusa co-authored the book from 1972 to 2000 when it was an everywhere presence inside the Beltway, used by everyone with any responsibility in the White House, Congress, the media, the cabinet and agency bureaucracies, and the lobbying and law firms.

The Almanac gave Grant access virtually anywhere he wanted in Washington during the 1980s, most importantly in the Reagan White House and among Republican members of Congress. Grant convinced not only [Dick Cheney](#), but also [Newt Gingrich](#), to vote "yea" on HR 442, even while a Japanese American congressman from San Jose voted "present." Another Japanese American congressman from Sacramento waived his rights to any forthcoming \$20,000 so that he could vote "yea" on the floor, which he did, contributing to the 218 votes needed to guarantee passage.^[2]

Grant decided to join the redress movement because of what was denied to his mother at her high school graduation and because of his memories of Joe Furuta. For his work on redress, Grant was made an honorary member of K Company, 442 RCT. More on his experience of redress and life in Wyoming can be found at: grantujifusa.com. As for Susan, she was elected Governor of Girls State, and went to Wellesley after high school.

For 10 years between 2001 and 2011, Ujifusa worked as a political consultant at the New York Japanese Consulate, and from 2001 to the present, on Wall Street. He is married to Amy Brooks, a graduate of [Sarah Lawrence](#) and the [Juilliard School of Music](#). They have two biological sons, [Steven](#), a historian who recently published *Barons" of the Sea* with [Simon and Schuster](#) and [Andrew](#), a journalist with [Education Week](#). Both are graduates of Harvard. Adopted son John, Amy, and Grant live in Chappaqua, New York, a suburb about 30 miles north of New York City, but they regularly return to their Wyoming farm, which has now been in family hands for 106 years.