



Former Rochester Mayor Charles "Chuck" Kenichi Hazama, 89, passed away November 28, 2021, at his home at The Waters on Mayowood after suffering from a recent stroke and declining health due to Alzheimer's. Chuck was the son of Charles Kengo and Mildred Kimi Hazama and was born September 1, 1932, in the McGerrow Camp in Pu'unene, Maui.

Chuck embodied the Aloha spirit of his Hawaiian roots and was a compassionate and dedicated civic leader. He motivated others with his effervescent personality, great sense of humor and bright smile. Chuck was elected to eight, two-year terms as Mayor of Rochester, Minnesota, serving from 1979-1995. He believed that "city government must be open to all the people and responsive to their wishes". To demonstrate this, he removed the door from his City Hall office at the outset of his first term.

Under Chuck's leadership, Rochester achieved "All American City" status and was named to Money Magazine's annual "Best Places to Live" list multiple times. He played a key role in completing Rochester's major flood control project, which included building seven reservoirs and channels in downtown to protect the city from future flooding after the historic 1978 flood. Chuck also established Rochesterfest, a popular weeklong event held each summer to celebrate and promote the city of Rochester. He was a longtime member of the Congregational Church and held leadership roles in multiple organizations, including the Sertoma Club, Rochester Area Church Council, and the International Racquetball Association.

Chuck and his late wife Almira "Aly" Oyakawa (1937-2002) and their two children, Chuck and Ann, moved to Rochester in 1967, when he was hired to serve as the Physical Director at the YMCA. Later, from 1972-1979, Chuck served as the YMCA Executive Director. The Hazamas bought a home on 11-1/2 Street, SW where the family lived joyfully for 49 years. Chuck especially enjoyed keeping the neighborhood children active and built a softball field behind their home named "Dandelion Field". In the early evening, he'd have the kids play capture the flag in that same grassy field. Early in his career, Chuck served as the Physical Director at the Waterloo YMCA and was called the "Jack LaLanne of Iowa" for his popular weekly television exercise show "Y's Ways to Health".

As a youth, Chuck loved playing all sports, especially football and was quarterback of his high school football team in Maui. He was a lifelong sports enthusiast and enjoyed swimming, racquetball and fishing. After graduating from high school in 1950, Chuck travelled to the mainland and attended college at Grinnell College in Iowa, where he studied social sciences and physical education. Chuck's college years were interrupted when he was called to serve in the United States Army during the Korean War. One highlight of Chuck's experience was the opportunity to climb Mount Fuji when he was stationed in Japan. He received a Purple Heart for his military service and was a member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

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Chuck continued his undergraduate studies in 1955 at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), where he met his future wife, Aly. He served as the first president of the Hawaii Club, a social group organized by Chuck and some friends for Hawaiian students attending the Teachers College. Chuck graduated in June 1957 and married Aly a year later on June 1, 1958. While in graduate school at UNI in the early sixties, Chuck and Aly had an "open door policy" for Hawaiian students. To help the students feel at home in Iowa, they often welcomed students to their small apartment above the campus laundromat to cook and share favorite Hawaiian meals.

Chuck loved to travel and experience the world. With traveling comes dining on different cuisines - and Chuck definitely relished that! He was also passionate about gardening and enjoyed spending time in the gardens at his Rochester home and his family home on Maui, where he lived for much of the winter during his retirement years. While on Maui, he was active with the Nisei Veterans Memorial Center, a docent at the Alexander & Baldwin Sugar Museum and let's not forget the "Minnesotans on Maui" annual picnic reunion at Kalama Park. Attendees brought a hot dish, wore a Minnesota t-shirt and spoke Minnesotan. Chuck also loved to sing and in 2004 recorded his first of three CDs accompanied by his companion and piano aficionado Corrine "Corky" Welch. Chuck's first CD "From Maui to Mayor" included twenty of his favorite songs.

In addition to his beloved wife Aly, Chuck was preceded in death by his parents, his only sister Charlotte and his step-grandson, Luke. He is survived by his son Chuck (Deb), Winter Springs, Florida; daughter Ann, Scottsdale, AZ; grandson Nicholas, Winter Springs, FL; five nieces, Liane Muromoto, Maui; Lynn Tomokiyo, Rochelle Iwashita, Wendy Iwashita Perez, and Lois Iwashita Brown, all of Oahu; and five of his son's step-children, Stephanie, Linsey, Tony, Danny, and Tess.

The family would like to thank the compassionate caregivers at Mayo Palliative Care, The Waters on Mayowood and Season's Hospice. A service celebrating Chuck's life will be held Saturday, June 18, 2022 at 11:00 a.m. at the Congregational Church in Rochester, MN. A visitation will be held Friday, June 17th from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. at the church.