

# A resolution

adopted by *The City Council*  
of the *City of Chicago, Illinois*



## TRIBUTE TO JOHN SASAKI

**WHEREAS**, John Sasaki, an outstanding, businessman, citizen, and beloved member of his community, passed away on January 9, 2024 at the age of 87; and

**WHEREAS** John Sasaki started life as the son of Mona and Jimmy Sasaki on April 16, 1936, in Los Angeles, California. His father had been born in Japan, but his mother and brother were both U.S. citizens, born in California. In 1942, when John was just 6 years of age, his family along with 120,000 other people of Japanese descent, a majority of whom were U.S. citizens, were forced to leave their homes, businesses, pets, and everything else behind except what they could carry, to be incarcerated in War Relocation Centers, also known as internment camps; and

**WHEREAS** John, his parents and his older brother Fred were forced to leave their apartment and successful dry-cleaning business in Los Angeles to live in a temporary relocation center at a horse-racing track outside that city as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the nation of Japan, a dark chapter in American history that shaped John's character and fueled his future commitment to justice; and

**WHEREAS**, after six months at the racetrack camp, the Sasaki family was transferred to an internment camp in Heart Mountain, Wyoming. His parents were eventually transferred to another camp in Reno, Nevada, on a work-release program. John Sasaki and his brother were left in the care of relatives at another internment camp in Utah. When this mass incarceration ended in August of 1944, John's father and mother separated. His mother took her two sons to Chicago and opened a dry-cleaning business in the East Lake View neighborhood where there was an established Japanese community; and

**WHEREAS** despite such adversities, John overcame these early challenges with resilience and determination. He excelled academically, graduating as valedictorian from Lakeview High School and later attended the University of Chicago on an academic scholarship, where he displayed exceptional leadership as a Cadet Commanding Officer in the ROTC; and

**WHEREAS** John served in the U. S. Army before taking over the business his mother started with his brother. He met and married Becky Alstott, whose family ran a restaurant not far from the dry-cleaning business. To this union three daughters were born. Although his wife passed away in 2010, he leaves behind to celebrate his legacy of love and resilience his daughters Emily Sasaki, Ellen Sasaki McGarry, and Meggie Sasaki-Resendiz along with four grandchildren. His dedication to hard work eventually led to the successful establishment of the Barry-Regent, a still-thriving dry-cleaning establishment in the heart of the East Lakeview neighborhood; and

**WHEREAS**, when John Sasaki's family first came to Chicago, they were aided by the Chicago Resettler's Committee, a not-for-profit organization that later was renamed the Japanese American Service Committee. Throughout his life in this city, John was an avid supporter who helped raise money for the group and was a former board member. Today, the Japanese American Service Committee is still actively working to preserve and celebrate the culture that brought him solace and purpose later in life, and

**WHEREAS** John Sasaki's life was fraught with challenges, triumphs, and an enduring spirit that touched the lives of those around him, leaving an indelible mark on the community he called home. John's civic commitments extended beyond business and family, as he immersed himself in this city's cultural scene, enjoying classical music, opera, and passionately supporting Chicago sports teams; and

**WHEREAS**, the Honorable Bennett R. Lawson, Alderman of the 44<sup>th</sup> Ward, has informed this august body of the passing of this outstanding business leader and esteemed contributor to the betterment of his community; now therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED** that we, the mayor, and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered this 16<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024, do hereby extend our deepest condolences to the family of John Sasaki and express our sincerest sympathies to his many friends and acquaintances whose lives he touched.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to the daughters of John Sasaki.

**BENNETT R. LAWSON**

Alderman – 44<sup>th</sup> Ward