
Honoring
Kiyoshi 'Kiyo' Hamakawa
Distinguished Educator



Kiyoshi Hamakawa was born the fourth of six children to Bunkichi and Masame Hamakawa. Known to his close friends as “Kio,” he grew up in the Villa Franca area of Hilo, attended Kapiolani Elementary, and spent many hours at the old Hilo Center nearby, playing every sport as the seasons changed from football to basketball to baseball and track. Kiyoshi’s love of sports followed him throughout his life—later leading him to play basketball at Hilo High School and Springfield College in Massachusetts.

Kiyoshi attended Hilo Intermediate and graduated from Hilo High School in 1947. He enrolled at UH Manoa, but transferred to Springfield College after one year because of his love of basketball and his desire to play the sport at the very school where the game was famously invented by James Naismith in 1891. At Springfield College, Kiyoshi played for—and later coached with—Basketball Hall of Fame coaches John Bunn and Ed Steitz. While in college, he banked on his athletic prowess by boxing professionally in nearby Holyoke to earn money for school. Kiyoshi graduated in 1952 with a degree in Physical Education.

After graduation, Kiyoshi enlisted in the Army and proudly served in the Korean War from 1952-1953. In 1954, he returned home from the war and married Mikako Nagami. Together, they have five children—Bruce, Curt, Donna, Eric, Fay—and five grandchildren.

Kiyoshi began his teaching career and also coached basketball at Konawaena High School. Then, after taking time to earn his Masters in Biology from Springfield College, he taught at Keaau Intermediate and Hilo Intermediate before landing his dream job as Vice Principal at his beloved Hilo High School, a post he held from 1965-1984.

During his tenure at Hilo High, Kiyoshi made a positive impact on the lives of many students. His only “hobbies” at the time were centered around the students at school and service to the community. Kiyoshi was especially active in with the Hilo Lions Club.

When his last child, Fay, graduated from Hilo High School, Kiyoshi retired from school service. For his many contributions, the class recognized him as an honorary graduate of the Class of 1984. He was very proud to “graduate” with Fay.

A Viking forever, today, almost 69 years after graduating, and 32 years after retiring from Hilo High School, Kiyoshi Hamakawa still bleeds Blue and Gold.
