

Iris Watanabe Of Santa Cruz Is First Japanese-American To Join WACS

By Gloria Yates

Iris Watanabe, a resident of Santa Cruz until she was evacuated with other Japanese in this area, on Monday became the first Japanese-American member of the Women's Army Corps, the Associated Press announced.

Miss Watanabe, now 20, was the youngest daughter of a former gardener here, Walter Watanabe, and most of her girlhood was spent with her family at their home at 17 Cedar street.

One of 17 young women who took the WAC oath at a special

ceremony in the office of Governor John C. Vivian at Denver, Colo., Miss Watanabe gave a brief talk in which she stated: "I've always been opposed to Japanese militarism. I welcome this opportunity to serve America not only for myself, but on behalf of other Japanese-Americans."

The young WAC recruit was working in Chicago when she was notified of the acceptance of her application for enlistment.

A graduate of Santa Cruz high school in June, 1940, in the upper 25 per cent of her class, Miss Watanabe was well-liked by both her fellow-students and her teachers, who will remember her

as much for her flower-like loveliness as her gracious manner, intelligence and cheerful disposition.

Miss Watanabe was a commercial major in high school and as an "office practice" student in the office of the former principal, Walter E. Elmer, was highly thought of by all with whom she worked. "Iris was very co-operative and responsive to suggestions," stated Miss Mabel Jarvis, secretary to the principal. "She was respected by everyone."

She showed talent as an artist while in Mission Hill junior high school, but did not continue art in high school. A sister, Grace, was

an art student of promising ability. Another sister, Katie, received high honors when she graduated from the local high school about 1930 and entered the social-service field. Mark, only brother of the girls, was also a popular student and was elected to the student council while in high school.

When evacuated from her home here, Miss Watanabe, like most other Japanese in this vicinity, was removed to Poston, Arizona, relocation center. In February she assisted in registering the Japanese at the center, and at that time was planning on entering some branch of the service, her friends stated.

Sentinel. 14 dec 1943, pl, c4

Clipped By:



SCMAH

Sat, Jun 27, 2015