

2018 Vernonia High School Hall of Fame Celebration

Seven Vernonia High School graduates were inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame at the annual dinner held at Cedar Ridge on Saturday, April 7. This year's inductees are Ben Soejima (Class of 1942), Ralph Sturdevant (1945), Reese Sturdevant (1972), Ken Roberts (1975-76), Kari Garner (1980), Mall Hillhouse (1988), and Mary Ann Miller (2000). VHS Athletic Director Gordon Jarman emceed the festive event.

Jim Eckland, Class of 1962, provided the introduction of Ben Soejima, who at age 95 is the oldest inductee so far. Jim's remarks related the story of the World War II internment of West Coast Japanese-Americans that included Ben and his family. (Note, in this issue of the Voice, we have reprinted the Sep-

tember 2013 "Good Old Days" column that discusses the Japanese in Vernonia with special focus on the Soejima and Kuge families.) Jim talked about Ben's high school career when he played football, basketball, and softball all four years in addition to being the Student Body Business Manager his senior year. Following World War II, Ben became a barber and opened his own shop on West Burnside in Portland in 1947. For the next 57 years, he operated his business and finally retired at age 80.

Ben always remembered Vernonia with affection, especially the school athletics. During the final construction phase of the new school building in



Ben Soejima and family

2012, he felt it was important that the coaches have their own office close to their players. The "Ben Soejima Room" in the boys' locker room at VHS is a trib-

ute to his financial contribution. He has since made other donations to the Vernonia Education Foundation's Sports Initiative Fund to help build the new softball and baseball fields.

Ben was accompanied to the award ceremony by his three daughters, Carol, Audrey, and Colleen, and their families.

The youngest inductee this year, Mary Ann Miller Kramer, is the daughter of Frank and Karen Miller. She was a state 2A champion in both track and cross country in 1999 and 2000. Her records still stand at VHS. Randy Aultman, Class of 1962, provided her introduction.



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