

Alice Yee: A Life of Service and Action

“The power, passion, and purpose of ancient female wisdom.” This phrase is the credo of the Crone’s Counsel, a non-profit organization that honors and advances the aging woman’s value to society. The description could also easily describe resident Alice Yee, a pioneer for women’s equality for more than three quarters of a century.



Born in the spring of 1919, in Spokane, Washington, Alice grew up in what she described as a “very traditional household.” Her mother was a homemaker and was content raising a family, but always stressed the importance of a college education to her daughter, prompting Alice to earn a master’s degree in guidance and counseling.

Following her first husband’s untimely death, Alice realized raising three young children as a single parent was not financially easy in the 1940s despite her advanced education and position as a community college teacher, particularly since there was so much inequality for women in the work place. Despite roadblocks, Alice saw a future in education administration.

She channeled her personal experiences into becoming what she calls “a change agent.”

Her first administrative position was at Central Washington University, where as dean of women, she questioned policies like curfews and dress codes that only applied to women.

After spearheading significant improvements at CWU, Alice gained a reputation for action. She was recruited to Grinnell College in Iowa where she was dean of women and later dean of students.

“The 1960s in particular was a time of great change and I could not ignore it,” Alice said. “I didn’t, I fought to improve things. It was tough, no doubt about it, but I believe I made a difference. My job was to ask why. I could not accept the status quo.”

In particular, Alice describes helping to transform a system at Grinnell from a philosophy of *en loco parentis* (a school-student relationship similar to that of a parent to a child) to a system of independent college students, where women and men were treated more equally.

A highlight of Alice’s career was her involvement with International Women’s Year in 1977, a nationwide program funded by the U.S. Government. During a state-sponsored conference at Central

Washington University, Alice was chairperson of the Washington State committee that made several suggestions surrounding issues like rights for the disabled, domestic violence policy and childcare. These recommendations were announced at the national convention in Houston and subsequently presented to then-President Jimmy Carter. Many of those recommendations were adopted as law.

Following retirement, Alice and her second husband Bob Yee, spent their summers fly fishing in many of the rivers of the Pacific Northwest. They pulled their trailer to San Diego in the winter to enjoy the climate and fell in love with the area. The couple eventually moved to Casa in 2014.

After Bob passed away in 2017, Alice has stayed active at Casa while still involved with women's issues. She is a member of Women of Ancient Wisdom, a sister organization of the Crone's Counsel. But her focus is more about settling into a comfortable lifestyle where she keeps busy writing bios of new Casa de Mañana residents for the community's resident-produced newsletter, walking more than two miles a day, working out and catching up with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren - on FaceTime of course.

"I spent the morning at a (socially distanced) exercise class and at three, my book club meets on Zoom," Alice said. "My philosophy is ... the situation today might not be perfect but you work with what you have."