

A Reflection On My 1981 Chubu University Experience

Requested by OU's International Studies Center
from all OU Chubu visiting faculty for an
October 6, 2009 Chubu—OU Gathering with
Chubu President Yamashita Okitsugu and other Chubu guests

My experience as a Chubu Visiting Professor from April through June, 1981 was a most significant “life changing” experience for me. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to have walked this Chubu-Ohio University “bridge across the Pacific” to an adventure that I have come to think of as a kind of secular epiphany.

I am so grateful also to my dear friends, Ohio University physics professor, Tomoyasu Tanaka and his wife Sumiko for their role in helping to give birth to this Chubu-OU -- “bridge across the Pacific.”

Let me touch on but two of the most meaningful of my Chubu experiences – [1] my ensuing deep and loving connection with Japan's 1947 Constitution's war-renouncing Article 9, and [2] the new creative insights and understanding in my engineering professional areas of “quality, reliability, and resource conservation by design” -- something from which my students also much benefited.

Life Changing Experience Number One

I had been in Japan for six months during the Korean War period as a B-29 combat pilot. Unfortunately as is most often the case in militaries the world over, I was quite busy with my killing and destruction duties, and thus remained completely ignorant of Japanese history and culture. Thus when the Chubu opportunity smiled at me in fall of 1980 – the first thing I did was to enroll us [my wife and me] in Professor Wid Elsbery's Ohio University course on Japanese history and culture. In this great course, in addition to much more, I read for the first time, Japan's post World War II Constitution -- and fell in love with its beautiful war renouncing Article 9. In 1991, I founded the Article 9 Society – USA [A9S-USA] with twin objectives, to -- [1] encourage Japanese people to keep Article 9 alive and well, and [2] to work toward placing an Article 9 type clause in all of Planet Earth's nations' founding documents. With this rather ambitious objective I also reflect on the following wisdom taken from The Talmud –

“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.”

Wonderfully, at Chubu I met the late Dr. Hiroshi Katsumori, physics professor, former Chubu Vice President, and one of the early enthusiasts for the birth of the Chubu--Ohio University program. I found that Katsumori sensei much shared my interest in Article 9, such that when I told him in 1991 about our A9S in the USA -- he founded many Japanese Article 9 Society groups in Japan

As a consequence of my Article 9 activity, since 1992, I have made ten multiple-week lecture trips to Japan and other journeys around the world in support of A9.

Life Changing Experience Number Two

Some of my professional academic concerns were and still are in the areas of engineering “quality and reliability” and “resource conserving technology and systems.” As a result of

several visits to and consultation with Japanese scientific and technical companies and persons – while I was at Chubu in 1981, I learned something of how Japanese auto companies were able to almost drive the US auto industry into the ground in the 1970s and 1980s. The Nagoya Toyota plant was one of the plants I visited. I learned that the Japanese placed much more emphasis on robust “engineering input” at the very beginning of the engineering design process than did US auto companies. To some extent, in the USA we thought that we could minimize design expense at the front end of the engineering design process and then ask the factory to produce a high quality product using Statistical Quality Control [SQC]. SQC is important, and the Japanese used that too, but a far more effective way to get high quality and reliable technology is to design it that way from the very beginning of the design process -- when the technology still lies between the ears of the engineers and scientists who are about to create it. I have come to call this Japanese insight and practice “Quality and Reliability by Design” [Q&RBD]. Subsequently I have taken these Q&RBD insights and used them in my professional efforts to create a more sustainable and a less globally warmed Planet Earth -- with what I have come to call “Green Technology by Design” [GTBD]

For more information on all of the above please see my unsophisticated web site www.article9society.org . On this web site you will also be able to understand how I am able to integrate and place in synergy my two “Chubu Life Changing Experiences.”

Peace,

Chuck Overby – OU Emeritus Engineering Professor – 1981 Chubu faculty.