



2-1-2014

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Noguchi, Sachie (2014) "Address Given at the Memorial Service for Eizaburo Okuizumi," *Journal of East Asian Libraries*: Vol. 2014 : No. 158 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jeal/vol2014/iss158/3>

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Address Given at the Memorial Service for Eizaburo Okuizumi

**Quadrangle Club, University of Chicago
October 3, 2013**

Sachie Noguchi
Japanese Studies Librarian
C.V. Starr East Asian Library
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Mr. Eizaburo Okuizumi, Japanese Studies Librarian of the East Asian Collection of the University of Chicago Library, passed away on July 21, 2013.

I would like to thank Mrs. Okuizumi for inviting me to attend this memorial service and letting me address Mr. Okuizumi on behalf of Japanese Studies Librarians in North America.

Dear Okuizumi-san,

When I learned the sad news of your passing away, I was on vacation in Victoria, Canada. The shocking news created a temporary vacuum in my mind, for only a few days ago, we Japanese Studies librarians had seen your posting to Eastlib about the multi-volume sets the University of Chicago had acquired. We all thought your posting was an indication that you were doing well and recovering from your serious health problem. Soon enough, however, the news sank in and I realized that the North American Japanese Studies community had lost our most experienced and knowledgeable librarian. Your passing is a true loss, not only to the University of Chicago, but also to North America, Japan and beyond. And to myself personally, I have lost my most invaluable senior colleague, my most important “*senpai*” of Keio University and home prefecture, Gunma, and a dear friend.

I first met you in the old main library of Keio University in the summer of 1966 when I was working as a library school intern. Our supervisor introduced you to us and I still remember the moment as if it was just yesterday— you were at the serial circulation desk wearing a blue paging coat and of course your glasses. You did not talk to me but gave a slight nod. Later, when I mentioned this incident, you did not remember me at all— it was only natural, since I was one of the interns who were provided by the library school every year. At that time, I had no idea that we would meet again twenty years or so later in the United States.

In 1984, you joined the East Asian Collection of the University of Chicago Library as the Japanese Studies Librarian. In the same year I started to

work for the Asian Library of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Both of us were working in the same state, Illinois. I remember, in the late 1980s, Keio University Library sent its librarians to the University of Chicago Library as exchange librarians for three years. I am sure these exchange librarians from Keio University had a greatly enhanced experience during their stay in Chicago since you were there to help them.

From 1993 to 1996, you chaired the Committee on Japanese Materials of the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), and I worked with you as a member of the Committee. Each year of your tenure, you brought an excellent scholar from Japan as a key note speaker to the annual conference session. However, since CEAL is a North American organization and the language of its proceedings is supposed to be English, these Japanese language presentations by the key note speaker caused quite a bit of difficulty for some of the audience, and the Committee received some complaints. You did not explain to me why you invited these speakers, but I believed that you must have found some incomparable value in these presentations, so I just responded to colleagues who complained by simply saying, "Oh, you know, this is the Okuism." Occasionally I found this or that Okuism, something a little out of the ordinary but involving advantages you valued, had been carried out or put into practice.

At a certain point we realized we were both from Gunma Prefecture— your noticeable Gunma accent gave a fellow Jōshuite warm feelings of familiarity and home. When the annual conference of the Japanese Library Association took place in Maebashi, the prefectural capital of Gunma, both of us along with a few others attended. Gunma is well known for its 2,600 or so hot springs, and after the conference we visited the hot springs in Ikaho. This trip to Ikaho was very enjoyable, a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other, and in particular discover your hidden remarkable talents in singing in *Karaoke* and painting in landscape. Another colleague who participated in this trip still shares such fond memories from this sojourn.

You were a dedicated librarian who built the excellent Japanese Studies collection; I deeply admire your superb collection development skills. You served not only faculty and students on your own campus but also many scholars and patrons from elsewhere who came to use your collection or contacted you for your assistance. In fact, recently when I was attending the conference in Europe, one scholar told me that she planned to visit you to discuss resources for her research when in Chicago next time, but now, that day will never come, and that makes her deeply sorry.

You were an extremely modest, generous, and warm-hearted person. Many of us greatly respected you for your deep knowledge and rich experience in the field and appreciated you for your willingness to help and share your expertise.

When I review the plethora of valuable research and publications you left behind, I am convinced that you decided to contribute your professional talents and life to dig out precious Japan-related hidden documents and bring them to light, starting from the Gordon Prange Collection, consisting of censored publications from the occupation-period, to your most recent work, 『初期在北米日本人の記録』シリーズ which roughly translates, Records of Japanese in North America in the early period of immigration. I know you must have spent many hours hard at work on these projects, even on weekends and holidays, as I discovered when I visited the library during the Thanksgiving weekend in 2011 and I found you in your office. Because of your dedication, these materials will not be forgotten forever, but will be used for study and research for many years to come. It must have been truly heart-breaking for you that you had to leave without completing the entire publication of this series.

Okuizumi-san, I trust you would not contradict me if I say that your life was a wonderful one. You had a lovely family, with an understanding and devoted wife, and two wonderful daughters and their spouses and children, your grandchildren. I fondly remember you happily telling us about babysitting your grandchildren, cutting grass in your daughter's garden, helping with your daughter's move, and such-like family joys. Indeed I know behind it all was your tireless efforts and hard work.

I feel a deep and lasting sadness when I realize there will be no more chances for me to listen to you talking with that warm and longing Gunma accent. We miss you dearly, Okuizumi-san, but please, now, rest in peace.

Thank you.



Sachie Noguchi and Eizaburo Okuizumi, University of Chicago Library, November, 2011