



Dr. Michitoshi Soga

1926 - 2013











Memorial Service — April 21, 2013

Opening and Welcome President John M. Dunn
Remarks from Japanese Consul General ... Honorable Kuninori Matsuda

Speakers

Dr. Jeffrey Angles

Associate Professor, Japanese Literature and Translation
Director, Soga Japan Center

Mr. Eiji Oshima

Chairman of the Board, Kalamazoo Kai
(WMU Japan Alumni Group)

Dr. Stephen Covell

Mary Meader (Associate) Professor of Comparative Religion
Associate Director, Soga Japan Center

Mr. Yasunori Nishihata

Chair, Committee of Battle Creek Japanese School

Dr. Timothy Light

Emeritus Professor of Comparative Religion
(read by Dr. Bassam Harik)

Dr. Howard Dooley

Professor of History
Former Executive Director of WMU's Office of International Affairs

Dr. Sung Chung

Professor of Physics

Mr. Michio Soga

Family member

Closing Remarks Dr. Jeffrey Angles



Refreshments and Fellowship

Guests are invited to join the Soga and WMU families
for refreshments in the Sangren Hall Atrium following the service.

Memorial donations may be made to support
Soga Japan Center programming.
www.mywmu.com/sogajapancenter



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Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Memorial services are always bittersweet occasions. They remind us of what we've lost. But they also offer us the opportunity to truly celebrate the life accomplishments of the person in whose honor we gather. Today's ceremony for Dr. Michitoshi Soga is a wonderful example of that duality.

At Western Michigan University, we pride ourselves on being learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged. I can think of no single member of our community who more strongly embodied all three attributes. As a university, community, state and nation, we are better because 45 years ago, Dr. Soga chose to make this university and this community his home and the place where he used his extraordinary talents.

The learners on our campus were mentored by a master theoretical physicist for whom discovery was at the heart of the discipline he loved. And Dr. Soga's nation of birth and his adopted nation soared to new levels of engagement because of his commitment to cross-cultural understanding.

Michitoshi Soga's unofficial title of WMU's "Ambassador to Japan" means he left a legacy that includes thousands of Japanese alumni, scores of new community friends who first came here as visitors and generations of young people who will be forever affected by their studies in the Battle Creek Japanese school that Dr. Soga helped establish.

Our friends from Japan who are here today join us to celebrate a lifetime devoted to bringing two nations together. Virtually every major visitor who came from Japan to West Michigan for business or educational purposes during the past few decades had the opportunity to meet and know Michitoshi Soga as a friend.

Today we note the loss of our friend, and we celebrate the joy of friendships that were nurtured and will last forever because he was part of our community. Thank you for being here.

With warmest regards,

Dr. John M. Dunn
President
Western Michigan University



曾我道敏先生との初めての出会い

私が総領事として米国ミシガン州デトロイト市に着任したのは、まだ夏の強い日差しの残る2010年8月下旬のことでした。着任前から、自分の管轄区域であるミシガン州にカラマズーという一風変わった名前の町があることは、高校時代に読んだ永井荷風の「あめりか物語」で知っており、機会を見つけて、カラマズー市を早く訪問したいという希望を持っていました。

カラマズー市のボビー・ハウプウェル市長への表敬訪問の日程が2010年11月4日に決まったことを受けて、総領事館のスタッフと共に、カラマズー市訪問の打ち合わせをしていた時、総領事館で教育交流を担当しているレア・ヤング職員から、「せっかくカラマズー市を訪問するのならば、カラマズー市にあるウェスタンミシガン大学の曾我センター設立に尽力した曾我道敏先生に是非とも会ってください」と助言されました。

そこで、早速連絡をして、4日夜に市内のホテルで曾我先生、亮子令夫人、レア職員として私の4人で夕食をご一緒することとなりました。

当日、約束の時間に少し遅れてホテルに着いた私共が慌ててロビーに駆け込むのを見つけて、レストランの入り口付近のベンチに座っていた一組の夫婦がさっと立ち上がって、深々とお辞儀をされました。その資格好の何とも言えない美しさ、優雅さを見て、遠くからでも直ぐに曾我ご夫妻だと私は確信しました。

その晩の夕食会は、長く外交官生活をして、多くの会食に参加してきた私にとっても実に心の温まる、楽しい一時となりました。

曾我先生は、実に淡々として落ち着いた口調で、米国に来たばかりの頃の苦勞話—ご自分の研究のこと、お子様達の教育、バトルクリーク日本語補習授業校の設立等—をまるで科学の実験結果でも説明するかのように話されます。それを横でニコニコしながら聞いている亮子令夫人が時々口を挟んで、事実関係を訂正したり、ご自分の感想を付け加えられると、今度は、曾我先生が何とも優しい眼差しで奥様をご覧になり、うんうんと頷かれます。

お二人のご様子は、こう申し上げるのは失礼かも知れませんが、まるで日本映画の巨匠である小津安二郎監督の白黒映画に出てくる古き良き時代の日本の夫婦の会話のシーンを見ているような、そんな実に心の安まる、静かで満ち足りた気分、それは、あたかも遠い少年時代、私が両親や兄弟と共に夕餉の食卓を囲んでいた時のような気分を私にもたらしてくれました。

私は、遠く日本を離れたこのミシガンの地で、曾我道敏先生ご夫妻と出会えたお陰で忘れていた美しい日本を取り戻しました。曾我道敏先生、有り難うございます。



在デトロイト日本国総領事
松田邦紀



Dear Friends:

Today, we both mourn the loss and celebrate the life of Dr. Michitoshi Soga. In so many ways, he was a role model for academia. He was a scholar who never forgot the big picture—the big picture for both his discipline and for the well being of our world.

Dr. Soga came to Western Michigan University in 1968 after establishing a successful career as researcher in nuclear and theoretical physics at both Japan's Tokyo Institute of Technology and America's Argonne National Laboratory. For the next 25 years, he taught physics at WMU.

Throughout his faculty tenure, he worked tirelessly to build relationships between WMU, West Michigan and Japan's institutions of higher education. He helped build formal institutional linkages, welcomed Japanese students coming to the United States and counseled American students who selected Japan as their study abroad destination.

“Retirement” for Michitoshi Soga—after 25 years in the classroom—did not mean withdrawal to a quiet life of relaxation. It simply meant he could turn his attention full time to nurturing the ties he had already built between two nations. For 20 years after his formal retirement as a faculty member, his focus was on this University's and this region's global engagement. One of the highlights of that period most certainly was the founding of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center, which promotes research to advance knowledge about Japan and serves as a community resource for students, scholars, governmental entities, civic and corporate leaders and the general public.

Dr. Soga's continued involvement on campus long after his formal retirement speaks volumes about his full life as a scholar. Teaching and sharing knowledge was never a job for him. It was a calling—his life's work. Those of us who remain part of the faculty today celebrate his work. We also count ourselves as enormously proud that last fall we were able to fulfill one of Dr. Soga's lifelong dreams—the establishment of a major in Japanese at WMU.

Thank you for joining us to celebrate a scholar's life well lived.

With best regards,

Dr. Timothy Greene
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Western Michigan University



Dear Friends:

The foundation upon which Western Michigan University's mission and vision has been built, particularly the globally engaged pillar, was certainly fortified by the professional and personal contributions of Dr. Michitoshi Soga and the exchange opportunities he fostered between WMU and Japan.

Dr. Soga's dedication and service to advancing the University's global engagement efforts were recognized in 1987, when he assumed additional duties beyond teaching in the Physics Department to serve as an adviser for Japanese relations through WMU's Office of International Affairs.

Complementing his great enthusiasm for teaching, Dr. Soga was passionate about helping Japanese students feel at home once they reached Kalamazoo because he knew how important that was in achieving academic success. He served as a mentor and counselor to successive generations—for 28 years—opening his home and proudly introducing new Japanese students to the campus and Kalamazoo community.

The University honored Dr. Soga's substantial contributions in 2005 by establishing the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center for research in Japanese studies and to offer cultural activities throughout Michigan. The University also established the Michitoshi Soga Presidential Scholarship for Japanese students, which has provided financial support to graduate assistants conducting community-based Japanese language classes.

The increased focus on Japanese studies made possible through the Soga Japan Center led to an outcome achieved in fall 2012 that was dear to Dr. Soga—the establishment of a Japanese language major at WMU, which in its first year has welcomed 45 students, bringing to nearly 100 the number of students who have declared the language as a minor or major.

Dr. Soga's great commitment to Japanese studies and the legacy he bestowed on the University through his good work will continue to grow and prosper under the leadership of Dr. Jeffrey Angles, Soga Center director, and Dr. Stephen Covell, associate director. Though we are saddened that he is no longer with us, we will honor Dr. Soga's memory by working closely with the Soga Japan Center to ensure his vision becomes ever more fully realized.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bassam Harik

Vice Provost

Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education





本校の名誉顧問、曾我道敏先生の本校に対するこれまでのご功績に敬意を表し、ご冥福をお祈りいたします。

曾我道敏先生は1980年に本校の前身である日本語教室の開設にご尽力されました。

その後も1981年に本校が開校するとき、また、本校の分校としてカラマズー校を開校するとき、そして、1993年に本校に日本の文部省より教員が派遣されるときも多大なるお力沿いをいただきました。

このように現在まで本校の顧問としてまた名誉顧問として本校の運営面にお力沿いをいただいただけでなく、本校の特別講師としても数多く、本校の日本人の子供に対して直接ご指導をいただきました。

あるときは本校の入学式や卒業式、オープンハウスでご祝辞をいただき、またあるときは特別授業の講師として国語や算数、社会科の内容をわかりやすく、楽しくご指導いただきました。特に国語の読書の指導には力を入れられ、子供たちに読書の素晴らしさを伝えていただきました。

お陰様で、本校は開設してから33年目を迎えますが、現在も60名以上の幼児、児童生徒が何不自由なく、毎週楽しく学んでおります。

現在の本校があるのも、曾我先生がアメリカで生活する日本の子供に、日本語の教育、日本文化の教育が大切であると訴え、保護者をはじめ、関係の企業、地元教育委員会に働きかけ、日本語教室、日本語補習授業校の必要性を説き、一緒に開設、開校までこぎつけ、その後も本校の発展にご尽力いただいた賜物と確信いたしております。

この後も、私達本校関係者は曾我先生のご意志を受け継ぎ、現在本校で学んでいる子供たちのため、そして将来入学してくるであろう多くの子供たちのために努力していくことをお誓いし、曾我先生に対する感謝とお別れの言葉といたします。

2013年4月21日

バトルクリーク補習授業校

Battle Creek Japanese School



Dear Friends:

I came to know Professor Michi Soga through our shared interest in international affairs at WMU. Michi's willingness to work for international understanding full-time after he retired from teaching physics has brought incalculable benefit to WMU and especially to our fortunate students, and now to the increasing number of colleagues who specialize in studying Japan. Mrs. Ryoko Soga shared his concern for deepening mutual understanding between Americans at WMU and counterparts in Japanese universities. As Michi told me more than once, she eagerly used her important contacts to further our University's relations in Japan. Throughout my career—both here and in China—I have never met anyone who has had a more profound an impact on the relations between an American university and counterparts in another country.

Personally, I especially cherish in memory the wonderful two weeks in 1993 during which Michi allowed me to accompany him in visiting WMU's Japanese partner institutions in Japan. No trip has been both so pleasurable and so educational for me. None has been so easy for me, either. Michi's thoughtful grace and foresighted attention to all of the details of our travel made it such a joyous trip. I will never forget his special kindness in arranging an evening in a village that is famous for its unagi, one of my favorite dishes. Nor will I ever forget the many lessons that I learned. It was he who explained to me the origins of the Keio-WMU relationship and how a terrible tragedy had yielded a full generation of close friendship between two institutions. It was from him that I learned of the problems for higher education (especially the private sector) with a declining college-aged population. It was with Michi that I had the chance to meet the then President of Keio University and hear a candid account of his establishing a second campus away from the historic Keio home to foster the launch of new major subjects which the extant faculty of the time could not imagine introducing into the curriculum.

On that trip Michi told me how he decided to leave Japan because of the negative effect of the student uprisings in the early 1970s. He recounted his first three years at a very prestigious college in the East, but at which he felt he would never feel at home, and his decision to accept Western's invitation because he sensed that he and his family would end up truly belonging here. The Soga Center will remain as a tangible monument to Michi's remarkable impact on this institution in which he found a home. An equally enduring monument lies in the hearts and memories of those of us who have had the honor and pleasure to work with Michi Soga and the privilege of calling Michi Soga our friend.

With best regards,
Dr. Timothy Light
Emeritus Professor of Comparative Religion



My memories of Dr. Michitoshi Soga

Dr. Sung Chung
Department of Physics

I first met Dr. Soga in early February of 1986, when I came to Kalamazoo for a job interview. I don't clearly recall anything except a certain image. Michi was giving me a ride to the airport after two busy days. I now remember we were on Oakland Drive, with the air crisp and bright and snow on the side of the road. He had asked whether I had gone for other interviews, I had given a short response, and a long pause followed. It was like a Zen conversation.

After I joined the WMU Physics Department as a member of the faculty, I learned that Michi's Ph.D. advisor was Professor Shinichiro Tomonaga, a physics Nobel laureate from Japan, and that he had held an assistant professor position at the Tokyo Institute of Technology for several years. In fact, I studied Tomonaga's texts during my undergraduate studies at the Tokyo Institute of Technology—particularly Quantum Theory and Quantum Field Theory—when I was preparing for entrance examinations for graduate school. As a Korean born in Japan, my cultural background deeply overlapped that of Michi. Whatever I said about Tomonaga, Michi already knew. He even knew Tomonaga's books of essays and foreword to his colleague's German-to-Japanese translation of "The Theory of Relativity" by Möller.

My first house was right next to Michi's, on Eldridge Street off West Michigan Avenue. I have many happy memories of Michi's house. Japanese students, exchange scholars, and a half-retired and half-refugee Japanese newspaper writer filled his living room. Sake, Japanese liquor, was always there too. I fondly remember the intense discussions on Japanese literature, and sometimes American literature, including Salinger, in whom one Japanese exchange scholar specialized. But Michi didn't talk much. He was just there, smiling and serene, and enjoying Mrs. Soga's delicious Japanese food. I only remember Michi saying, "This is the last sake," as he brought out a 1.8 liter bottle.

After his retirement around fifteen years ago, I heard Michi and Mrs. Soga had started reading "The Heart Sutra" (*Han'nya shingyō*), a Buddhist text with less than 300 characters and the ultimate condensation of human wisdom about the being, the universe, and material pain. In it, one finds the words "*Shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki*" (色即是空空即是色), which represent the core of Japanese culture and philosophy. Indeed it is a philosophy; a direct translation might be, "Color is empty, empty is color." As we age, sooner or later we must confront the deep questions "what is life? Can I face death with dignity and without fear?" The Heart Sutra says that everything is an illusion: *

*Aging and death is the last consequence of illusion,
there is no such thing,
nor the disappearance of aging and death.*

Likewise,

*No pain, no cause of pain,
no disappearance of pain,
nor any way to remove it.*



Physicists would call such self-contradictory statements “quantum mechanical.” Curiously, I received a two-volume book from my physics colleague Professor Min-Su Jang of Pusan National University at around the same time. He once visited WMU for two months on sabbatical, and Michi and Dr. Howard Dooley once visited him to discuss an arrangement between WMU and a college in Namhae, the town Professor Jang and I both called home. The book “Man-haen; From Harvard to Pha-ge Temple”** was written in Korean by an American whom we only know as Hyung-Gak. He was a graduate student studying religion and philosophy at Harvard, and later went to Korea to practice Buddhism. I was intrigued by a particular line in the book:

What is Buddha?

And the answer surprised me:

Buddha is a white wall to which you put your palms together and pray.

Close my eyes, I can vividly see Michi smiling. I can hear him whispering,

Chung-san, do you know what is Buddha?

It's the warm Spring air outside.

And I am now with him.

I feel very fortunate to have met him and shared many pleasant things with him. I am also deeply indebted to him for the tremendous help he gave me, particularly in my times of personal crisis. He was an integral part of my life. Did he preach anything to me? No, he did not preach.

He was there, but at the same time not there.

Indeed, Michi is a warm burst of spring air.

More recently, I frequently saw Michi with Mrs. Soga at the concerts of Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra, where my nineteen year-old son served as concertmaster for a couple of years. I can still clearly envision his face in the Chenery Auditorium on South Westnedge Street.

I will not soon forget Michi, and one day, I will join him.

Gasshō (合掌) “palms together”,
Sung Chung

* 迷いの最後の結果である老いも死もないし、老いや死がなくなることもありません。

** Manhaen= 萬行 means everything is practice.



Remembering Dr. Soga

Eiji Oshima

7th Murakami Scholarship recipient

WMU Class of 1970

Chairman of the Board, Kalamazoo Kai

Dear Mrs. Soga, members of the Soga family, President Dunn, and friends from WMU:

On behalf of 620 members of Kalamazoo Kai, the WMU alumni society in Japan, who, in many ways, have deep and warm memories of Dr. Michitoshi Soga, I would like to express my sincere condolences to Mrs. Soga and her family.

Dr. Soga, Soga-Sensei as we called him, was the father for all the students and scholars who came from Japan to WMU. He had three beloved sons, but in reality, Dr. and Mrs. Soga had more than 600 sons and daughters, and probably many more, over the course of the 45 years that they lived in Kalamazoo.

As one of the sons, I wish to say a few words about my experiences with the Soga family in the early days of their settlement here. I must say that it involved much more than just a friendly association with the family.

I was the seventh Keio Murakami scholarship student from Keio University who arrived in Kalamazoo in 1969. It was just one year after the Soga family joined WMU. When I arrived at WMU, I was determined not to meet with any other Japanese people, nor speak Japanese with anybody who may try to do so. But that lasted only three months. By the time Thanksgiving Day came, exchange students like us needed a warm place where we could escape from the freezing weather of Michigan. All the Japanese students at WMU, and there were only about ten of us, got to know each other when we were invited to a dinner by the Soga family on that holiday. I, for one, loved his Japanese literature library immediately, and later spent many hours reading the books he kindly lent me.

Since then, there were many occasions when Dr. and Mrs. Soga kindly invited us to gather around in their living room, and through these occasions, I met my future wife, Kiyoko. What is amazing is that it was not only us who married afterwards, but there were two more couples, Mamoru and Noriko Takamura and Sadao and Sachiko Kido. There must have been something in the Soga family that made us young and hopeful couples to dream that one day, we all could be like the Sogas—a warm, sincere, joyful, and loving family.



I was filled with sorrow to hear that Mrs. Soga lost her lifelong partner; all the more because I lost the love of life just four months prior to Soga Sensei's passing away.

When we learned that Kiyoko had terminal cancer, starting in June and continuing through November of last year, our family fought the same battle against cancer as the Sogas. In those six months, Mrs. Soga and I exchanged a number of e-mails, trying to encourage each other.

Mrs. Soga, we tried hard, didn't we?

I know how much Mrs. Soga misses her husband from the way I miss my wife. The only consolation, and I am sure Mrs. Soga will agree on this, is that Soga-Sensei and Kiyoko both told us, their spouses, that they had no regrets whatsoever about the rich and full lives they led.

I sincerely wish that Kiyoko and Dr. Soga are having a nice chat by the fireside at the deep corner of the universe, together with Mamoru Takamura, and Yumiko Miyazaki, the eighth Murakami Scholarship student, who passed away almost twenty years ago.

Maybe Yukiko Murakami and many others will also be there to greet them. I hope that they are having a nice reunion up there.

Loved ones, we pray for you all.

Thank you!



Remembering Dr. Soga

Dr. Jeffrey Angles

Director, Soga Japan Center

Associate Professor, Japanese, Department of World Languages and Literatures

Recently in collecting materials for this memorial booklet, I reread an old article published in the *Kalamazoo Gazette* in 2006 on the occasion of the founding of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center here on campus. In that article, called “Building Bridges”, and reprinted here in this booklet, there are many anecdotes about Soga-Sensei’s life and photos of the beautiful home he shared with his wife, Ryoko. In that same article, however, Soga-Sensei stated that he had three major dreams when he began working in international affairs at WMU. As I sat down to think about how to honor his life and legacy today, I thought it would make sense to comment on the progress of those three dreams, as a way of showing the legacy that Soga-Sensei has bequeathed to us.

According to the article, his first dream was to solidify the relationship between WMU and its oldest exchange partner, Keio University in Tokyo. Thanks to plans he put in motion decades ago, the relationship between our schools has never been stronger. For more than forty years, we have been sending students back and forth between our schools, and each year, two students, one from Japan and one from Michigan, receive the Murakami Scholarship—a full-ride scholarship to spend a year exploring, living, and learning in the other country. Keio has become one of the most popular and sought-after programs among WMU students, and many of our Japanese-studies students at WMU apply to Keio each year, hoping to spend some time there.

The second dream was to send at least twenty students from WMU to Japan each year. This was an extremely important, forward-thinking goal. Since I came to WMU in 2004, I have watched the Japanese program blossom from a tiny program with only a few dozen students to one with nearly two hundred students taking courses each semester. We have so many students that last year, we had more students apply to study abroad in Japan than we had positions in Japan to send them. In the end, the Japanese professors and study-abroad staff had to think creatively to find ways to send all of the qualified students.

Dr. Soga’s third and final dream was to see the establishment of a Japanese major at WMU, and for years, he worked quietly behind the scenes to advocate for this critical language, spoken by 127 million people in Japan, plus several more million abroad. In fall 2012, after many years of hard work, the Japan-studies faculty were finally able to make his dream a reality, and WMU began offering a Japanese major. Within the space of a single semester, enrollments swelled radically, and the number of majors and minors in Japanese overtook the numbers of the more commonly taught European languages, such as French and German. Now, only one semester later, Japanese is the largest program in the Department of World Languages and Literatures and the largest language at WMU after English and Spanish. Soon before he passed away, I spoke to Soga-Sensei about the wild success of Japanese at WMU, and he emphasized how pleased he was



that the new major had turned out to be so popular and vibrant. I only wish that Soga-Sensei had been with us longer to watch the major as it continues to develop and thrive.

I mention all of this today not only because I am proud of the development of Japanese studies at WMU, but also because this growth shows what a visionary Soga-Sensei was. Even as far back as the 1970s and 1980s, when the American public was only just beginning to notice Japan and to pay attention its economic rise, Soga-Sensei was already working hard on our behalf. He never let us forget his vision of a future in which Japan and America would embrace one another, reaching across the Pacific to become best friends. Certainly, today, Japan is one of our best friends here at WMU, and it is thanks to Soga-Sensei, our tireless ambassador, that we can say that.

Finally, on a more personal note, I would like to thank Soga-Sensei for his friendship. I first met him soon after coming to Kalamazoo in 2004 at one of the chamber music concerts hosted by Fontana Chamber Arts. When we spoke, I was impressed at what a kind, erudite, and polite man he was, a perfect gentleman in every regard. He took an enormous amount of sheer, simple joy out of beautiful things—art, music, architecture, food, and nature. At the same time, he appreciated small things as well. One evening, we were talking with the members of the Tokyo String Quartet, and Soga-Sensei shared his recollections of seeing them on their first trip to Kalamazoo many years before. He said that he had been enraptured by their performance. Afterward, when he and his wife went to dinner, they happened to arrive at the same restaurant where the members of the quartet were eating. The members were eating huge steaks, and that tickled Soga-Sensei to no end—the same people who had played Schubert and Beethoven with such quiet introspective sensitivity just a few minutes earlier were eating big, rich pieces of beef with obvious gusto. Years later, he still smiled as he told that story.

Not long ago, I moved into Parkview Hills and became Soga-Sensei's neighbor. The backs of our houses face one another across a wooded ravine. I often saw him from my window, walking in the woods with his wife, and we would sometimes talk with childlike delight about the deer and wild turkeys that walk so frequently between our houses. In the week before Soga-Sensei passed away, I wrote this poem in Japanese about the view of those woods. Because I know that those woods brought him so much happiness, I would like to dedicate this poem (next page) and its English translation to him.



ミシガンの冬

曾我道敏に

ものをやさしく
表現するのは
意外とむずかしい
例えば わたしは
幸せであると

幸福には 口がない
と理解するのに
何年もかかった
だから 耳を
立てずに 眼を
大きく開いて
眺めるだけ

光は梢から溢れて
雪にゆっくりと
衝突する 氷は
木に鍵をかけたが
坂の下で 小さな流れが
緩やかに届いて
そして また届く

Winter in Michigan

For Michitoshi Soga

it is unexpectedly difficult
to express things
simply
to say, for instance
I am content

happiness has no mouth
it took years
to understand this
so now, I no longer
prick up my ears
just open my eyes wide
and watch

the light overflowing
from the treetops
crashing slowly into snow
ice locked upon the trees
and below the slope, the small flow
as it gently arrives
and arrives



Remembering Dr. Soga

Dr. Stephen Covell

Chair and Mary Meader Professor
Department of Comparative Religion

As we go through life, if we are lucky, we have the chance to meet people who come to serve as role models for us—people who we recognize quickly as living life the way it was meant to be lived. To be honest, when my wife and I first moved to Kalamazoo from Tokyo we had the rare luck of meeting two such people. And, now, both have moved on.

When we first met Dr. Soga, my wife and I knew he was someone special. In his quiet presence and his open honesty we found someone to look up to. And, in the way he and his wife acted together, we saw a future that we could strive for.

When I first began working to build a Japan Center on campus I had tremendous help from colleagues at the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, but it was Dr. Soga who came to serve as the inspiration. It was my hope that the Center would reflect Dr. Soga's values. It could not be as many other centers are—namely a place that benefits primarily just faculty with travel funds and guest speakers—but something that served to span the distance between our cultures and open new vistas to students, community members, and faculty on both sides of the Pacific.

In the intervening years we have expanded the Center to include a vibrant outreach program. This program has brought Japanese culture to schools, libraries, retirement homes, art institutes and culture festivals all over Michigan. Beginning last year we created a workshop to bring together those working on Japanese cultural outreach across Michigan and in neighboring states. We hope that this will broaden the impact of the Center and export its successful outreach model. It is my hope that the Center will continue to carry on Dr. Soga's vision and that it will embody his values.



Saying goodbye to an “American made in Japan”



Michitoshi Soga, emeritus professor of physics at Western Michigan University, who dedicated his career to working with students to deepen the understanding between Japan and the United States, passed away March 3, 2013, in his home in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He was 86.

Dr. Soga began his career at WMU in 1968. He retired from the Physics Department in 1993, becoming an emeritus professor, and from all other duties at WMU in 1996.

The richness of Dr. Soga’s life can be measured by how deeply he touched those around him; especially his wife of 57 years, Ryoko, his children and their families. He brought his young family from Japan to the United States, opening opportunities and horizons for his



children likely unavailable had they stayed in their homeland.

He survived the air raids on Tokyo during World War II, and the senseless carnage he witnessed as a teenager led him to abhor war and work for peace. He sought to promote better understanding between Japan and the United States—former enemies that became great allies. To that end, he worked to increase the flow of students between U.S. and Japanese colleges and universities.

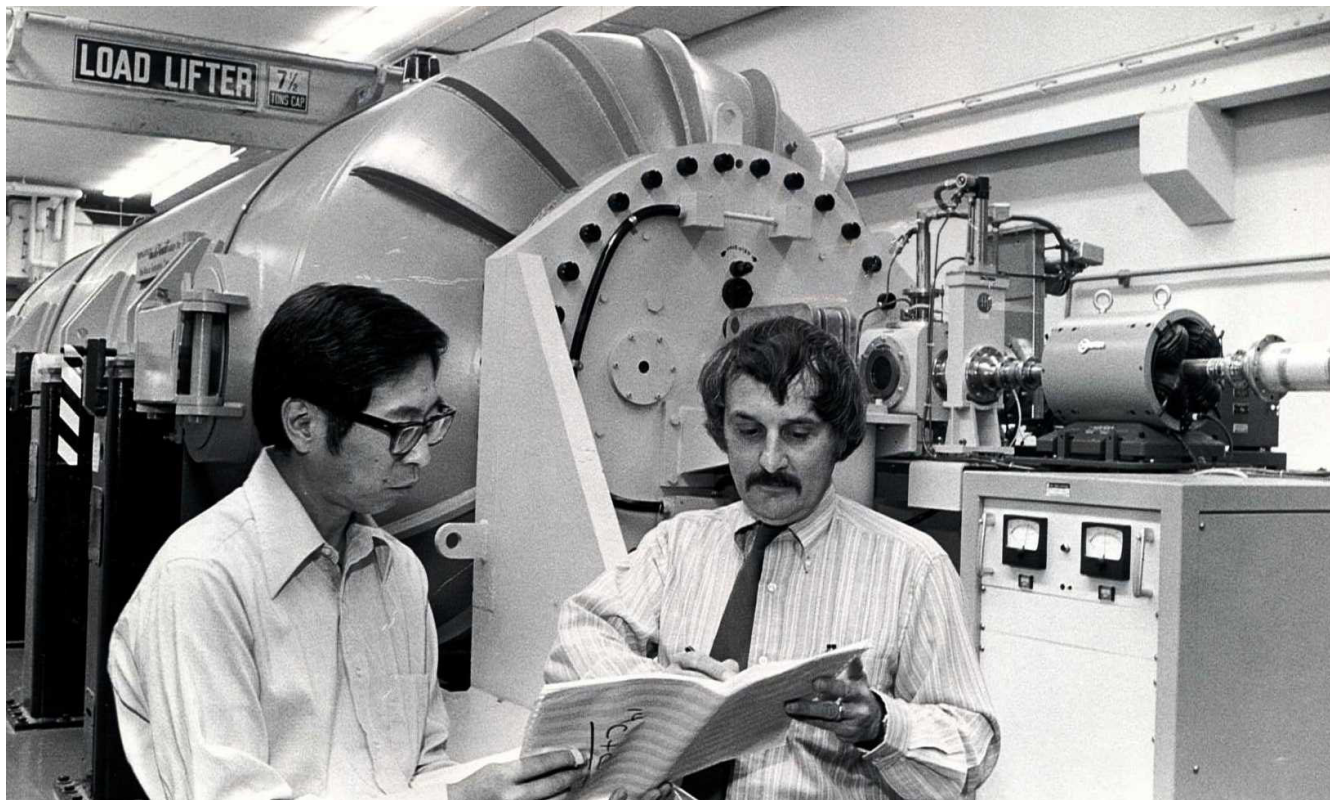
He found joy in quiet moments, sitting in the backyard of his home in Kalamazoo, either alone or in quiet conversation with his beloved Ryoko, whom he met as a high school student more than 66 years ago. He found joy in cooking together with and for his wife, favoring deceptively simple but delicious menus that were meticulously planned and painstakingly prepared. He also found joy in the company of old friends and the seemingly endless stream of young people who were a regular presence in his household while he



taught at WMU. The Japanese students, especially, could always count on a ready ear and home-cooked comfort food from the homeland when they dropped in on Soga-Sensei.

Dr. Soga was born September 17, 1926, in Tokyo, the sixth child of Sugao and Ko Soga. His life spanned three Japanese imperial eras—Taisho, Showa and Heisei—a period that saw unimaginable changes in Japan from the rise of militarism, to a war that left the country in ruins and occupied by foreign powers for the first time in its history, to its resurrection as a global economic power.

Dr. Soga studied physics at Gakushuin University in Tokyo, receiving his bachelor's degree in 1953 and a master's degree in 1955. That same year, he married Ryoko Nishi, his high school sweetheart. Studying at Tokyo University of Education under Professor Shinichiro Tomonaga, a future Nobel laureate in physics, Dr. Soga was awarded a doctorate in theoretical physics in 1958. Upon graduation, he joined the Department of Physics, the Faculty of Science and Engineering, at the Tokyo Institute of Technology.



Taking a leave of absence from the institute in 1961, Dr. Soga took his family with him on his first trip to the United States at the invitation of the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois. He came back to Japan after a two-year stay, but returned again in 1964 to finish the work he had started at Argonne, and again—this time for good—in 1965 accepting an offer from the Bartol Research Institute, at the time part of the Franklin Institute, in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

While he enjoyed research work, Dr. Soga longed also to work with and teach young people. So in 1968 he accepted a position in the Physics Department of WMU in Kalamazoo. In 1987, he assumed additional



WMU Accelerator Group Feb. 1974



duties in the WMU Office of International Affairs as an advisor for Japanese relations.

Fully embracing his adopted country, Dr. Soga became a U.S. citizen in 1978. He was truly a part of the WMU and Kalamazoo community, a regular at sporting events from university football to basketball to hockey to women's volleyball. He was also a long-time season ticketholder of the Kalamazoo Symphony and the Fontana Chamber Arts, and enjoyed numerous cultural and musical events.

Howard Dooley, a professor of history and the former executive director of what is now the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, called Soga "WMU's longtime ambassador to Japan."

"He was the perfect ambassador. He was at home in both worlds. He liked to describe himself as an American made in Japan," said Dooley of Soga, a Japanese native who became a United States citizen.

Most of all, he was mentor and counselor to the successive generations of Japanese students who attended WMU and the other colleges around



Kalamazoo. Every New Year, Dr. Soga would invite the Japanese students for a traditional meal. What began as a gathering of few students soon outgrew his home and necessitated renting a space each year—a testament to the success of his efforts to grow the exchange between the two countries.

The many Japanese students who studied at WMU and returned home form the core of the Kalamazoo-Kai (Kalamazoo Society) in Japan, a gathering of



those who have a connection to the city and, in most cases, a personal bond with Dr. Soga. As Dr. Steve Covell, chairman of the WMU Department of Comparative Religion and founding director of the Soga Japan Center, wrote to Dr. Soga's children, "the Japanese alumni loved your father and mother so much that they wrote a song about him and Kalamazoo ("Kalamazoo in Our Hearts") that they sing at all of their gatherings."



Dr. Soga and Bill Woods in Japan

"His unofficial title as 'Ambassador to Japan' was earned many times over—generations of students studying in Japan, and Japanese students studying in Kalamazoo, owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Soga," said Wilson "Bill" Woods, retired associate dean of the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education. "In developing partnerships with colleges and universities, the immediate benefits to students and faculty are important, but Dr. Soga taught us that we must always be mindful of the generations to come. Academic partnerships should survive long beyond the time of those whose handshakes appear in photographs."



Dr. Soga also was instrumental in the founding of the Battle Creek Japanese School (pictured above) that was formally recognized by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1984. The K-12 school's primary mission is to serve the educational needs of the children of Japanese ex-pats who are in the United States temporarily so that these students can transition back smoothly into the Japanese school system.

Dr. Soga's work for the Battle Creek school was illustrative of his community spirit that reached beyond the borders of Kalamazoo. The Japanese school was essential to the economic health of the neighboring city and the region, which was working to expand the presence of Japanese firms. In 2010, the Japan America Society of West Michigan in Battle Creek recognized Dr. Soga "for his outstanding lifetime achievements in fostering the cultural, educational and social ties between Japan and America communities in the West Michigan region."

In 2005, the WMU Board of Trustees honored Dr. Soga by establishing the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center for research in Japanese studies. He called this a "wonderful honor," yet typical of his modesty, he felt "puzzled" to be recognized in this manner for his work. The university also established the Michitoshi Soga Presidential Scholarship for Japanese students.



Dr. Soga's long years of service to U.S.-Japanese relations resulted in an honorary degree from Josai University in Tokyo in 2008. In 2010, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded him the Foreign Minister's Commendation, a recognition bestowed to those for their "outstanding achievements in international fields, to acknowledge their contribution to the promotion of friendly relations between Japan and other countries."

In the fall of 2012, Dr. Soga was able to witness the fulfillment of his long-standing wish when WMU established a major in Japanese. As a further testament to the success of his vision, more students were enrolled as Japanese majors than any other language in the Department of World Languages and Literature this academic year.



Dr. Soga is survived by his wife, Ryoko; his sons Michio and his wife Christine Hart of Princeton, New Jersey, Michiaki (Aki) and his wife Kimiko Yumoto of South Burlington, Vermont, and Michitaka (Taka) and his wife Sybrina of Seattle, Washington; his grandchildren Jason Hart, Sara Hart and her husband Maxime Turgeon, Brendan Hart, Michihiro Soga, Michiyuki Soga, Misako Soga, Michimi (Kai) Soga; and great-grandson Mathias Turgeon.





Personal Reflections from Family and Friends

In Remembrance of My Father

My father was the kind of man who did his family proud. Already established in his career, my father took a great risk by leaving the comfortable environs of his native Japan and immigrating to the United States. But the move opened up opportunities to his children that were unimaginable back home.

My father was a brilliant physics research scientist who developed into a great teacher and a caring mentor. Always foremost in his mind was the welfare of his students, and his students repaid his kindness with devotion and loyalty seldom witnessed. Through his first-hand experience with the horrors of World War II, he made it his life's mission to contribute toward a better relationship between Japan and the United States. It is gratifying that future generations will know my father through the Soga Japan Center. Yet, for those who knew my father, he will be best remembered for his humility, integrity and the selfless, steadfast manner in which he worked. His personal warmth touched those who worked with him and transformed his work colleagues into friends.

As successful as his professional life was, my father's greatest achievements were in his personal life. He was kind to his parents and siblings and loyal to his friends. Having known her since high school, he had a storybook marriage with my mother that lasted for over 57 years. As my mother attended to his needs while he was going through his chemotherapy last November, he wrote on her birthday card that after all these years, he had never been happier as being with her then. He was a great father who recognized that my brothers and I were unique individuals and encouraged us to pursue our respective lives in the direction we desired. He rarely lectured but he was always there with a ready ear and gave us wise counsel to help us keep headed in the right direction. And through it all, we knew that what my father wanted most was for his children to be happy.

My father truly was a great man. We will always be grateful for all that he did for us. There will never be another man like him. We love him dearly and miss him greatly.

Michio Soga



Comments from Dr. Soga's grandsons

“In the too-short decade I knew Jiji, I shared so many wonderful moments with him. Some of my favorite memories are from the time that he and Baba took me in during the frantic last weeks before my senior thesis was due. I remember coming upstairs, red-eyed and crazed, to sit and watch the NCAA basketball tournament on TV or to share a meal and laugh and smile with Baba and Jiji. No matter how frustrated I was with the tangled mess of my thesis, I always descended feeling light, happy, and rejuvenated. Indeed, Jiji always had a special, infectious sort of lightness about him, and anyone lucky enough to have crossed paths with him will know instantly what I mean.”—**Brendan Hart (grandson)**

“I remember when I was little, Jiji would pretend that the moles on his face were beans and he would pretend to eat them in a cartoonish fashion. I always used to get a kick out of that.”—**Hiro Soga (grandson)**

My Memories of Dr. Soga

Shoji Masuzawa
WMU Class of 1978

I met Dr. Soga and his family a few months after I arrived in Kalamazoo from Japan in the summer of 1971. It was the beginning of over 40 years of personal relationships and one of the best things to happen to me in America and in my life. I have visited him and Mrs. Soga often, especially after retiring from a company in the Detroit area and moving back to Kalamazoo over eight years ago.

He was a person who made everybody feel comfortable and always made himself available to discuss anything. During my time at Western in the 70s, I visited his home numerous times to just chit chat or borrow Japanese books or for delicious home-cooked Japanese meals. At that time, the only place in town where Japanese books were available was the collection in his basement. When we borrowed books we signed them out with the date, book title and our name. A few years ago, he showed me that notebook, and I found my name on many pages, as well as my friends' names. As soon as I saw those names it instantly brought me back to when I was student and recalled how I had good times at Dr. Soga's and how I enjoyed reading books. I borrowed a lot of books as an



excuse to visit his home. He told me that the notebook became an important document for his family because it shows who was attending school and borrowed books at particular times.

My favorite memory was attending a New Year party in the 1970s at the Soga's. Every year on January 1, they invited all Japanese students in Kalamazoo to the party. The total number of Japanese students at that time was more than a dozen, although that number increased in later decades. The Soga bought all materials and cooked traditional New Year meals.

In addition to Japanese meals, Mrs. Soga made delicious blueberry pies, which became one of my favorite American desserts. At the beginning of the party, Dr. Soga poured sake in a traditional red and black lacquered sake dish, and we sipped some. Everybody enjoyed the meals and had very good time. There were no Japanese restaurant and food items available in town at that time, so the Soga's kitchen was the only place we could have traditional Japanese meals. It was my favorite occasion and always fun—one time I even drove back all the way from California, where I was on vacation, to attend the party. We talked for long hours and often did not realize how long we stayed. It was not uncommon that we would suddenly realize it was dawn. Dr. and Mrs. Soga probably were tired but never complained about how long we stayed. We really appreciated their efforts and hospitality.

Dr. Soga was my personal friend, but also my teacher. In the mid-1970s, I had to take a physics class because it was required. When I checked the class schedule I found out that Dr. Soga was scheduled to teach. At that time, he was teaching physics only at the graduate level, but a faculty member who usually teaches undergraduate level physics was not available. At first I hesitated to sign up because Dr. Soga would eventually find out my IQ level and I did not like physics at all. However, after taking his class two times I began like it, not because I understood physics or received good grades. It actually was just the opposite; Dr. Soga gave me a barely passing grade.

The reason I liked his physics class was the way Dr. Soga taught us. He made students think logically, step by step. His exam was unique, he allowed us to have open books, open notes, could bring in any reference books and a calculator, but no cheating. Also, we could spend as many hours as we needed to complete the answers. One time I spent 3 or 4 hours to take the exam and he patiently waited until the last paper was turned in.

The important thing in Dr. Soga's class was not memorization of any mathematical formulas or physics theories, but understanding them and connecting them logically to solve a problem. The thought process to solve the problem was the key. Even if the answer was wrong, Dr. Soga gave us some points if the thought process made some sense. This thought process helped me greatly in my work after graduation. He was one of the best professors in my judgment.

In 1976, during the school summer recess, I was working at a foundry in Albion, Michigan. About a month into the job, Dr. Soga called me at work in the middle of night. My shift was from midnight to early morning. He conveyed a message from my sister in Tokyo that my father was seriously ill, so I should return home ASAP.



When he called, he offered to lend me money to buy an air ticket. I fortunately had saved enough money already to buy it, so I did not have to borrow the money from Dr. Soga, but I was moved and really appreciated his offer. That was the only time that money was involved in our long relationship. It showed how he was concerned about students and tried to help in any way he could.

Also, Dr. Soga was concerned not only with students on campus, but also with two female Japanese students who died in traffic accidents while attending Western—one in the 1960s and one in the 1990s. He helped to create a garden on campus in their memory, which he and Mrs. Soga have cared for ever since, including placing Christmas wreaths and other holiday decorations there each year. I always admired their efforts and compassion to keep these two former students remembered.

Dr. Soga was very intelligent. Of course I can never equal his IQ and other aspects of his life. But one thing I am truly equal to him is that we shared the same birthday, September 17. Every year we got together for a birthday dinner at a restaurant and celebrated. However, our last birthday gathering last year was at his home. He looked fine, but had some difficulty swallowing food. So, we had cupcakes and enjoyed conversation. We believed that we would celebrate it next year again, but it sadly is not possible now.

Dr. Soga told me at times that nature is “simple and beautiful.” I did not understand what he meant. Only a physicist like him could understand such things. However, I did learn to understand this in turn. Dr. Soga was a “simple” person: down to earth, never pretentious, did not brag, humble and always true to himself. Dr. Soga was a “beautiful” person: his personality attracted so many students as well as those who had a chance to get to know him. I am truly blessed to have known him and become one of his friends. He was my friend, teacher, counselor and mentor. I would like to simply say to Dr. Soga: “Thank you very much for everything you have done for me. I am very grateful and had a wonderful time with you.” I will cherish many fond memories about him for the rest of my life. Thanks again and rest in peace, Dr. Soga.



My Memories of Dr. Soga

高橋由美

Yumi Takahashi-Ede, Academic Advisor
WMU College of Arts and Sciences

曾我道敏先生は、私にとって、学習院大学の大先輩であり、仕事の面でも人生の面でも、全てにおいて私の恩師でした。カラマズーに来る以前に日本の目白で初めてお会いした時の曾我先生の優しい笑顔、こちらに来てから初めてお食事に招待して頂いた時に迎えに来て下さった時の優しい笑顔、どんな時でもいつも優しい笑顔で迎えて下さいました。曾我先生は、優しく時には厳しく常に私を支えて下さいました。曾我先生から受けたたくさんの人生の教えは一生忘れることができません。その中でも、相手の話をよく聞くということ、人間というのは誰かに話を聞いてもらうことによって自分で解決策を見つけていく、という教えは、今の私のウエスタンミシガン大学での仕事に大変役に立っております。幾度となく御自宅にお食事に招待していただき、曾我先生と亮子様と一緒に楽しく過ごさせて頂いた時間は私の人生の大切な宝物です。私がウエスタンミシガン大学で今このように働いてられるのも曾我先生のお陰です。ありがとうございました。謹んでご冥福をお祈り申し上げます。



Comments posted on the Soga Japan Center Facebook page about Dr. Soga's passing

Regina Cassens

I would like to thank Dr. Soga for providing me with the experiences and tools that are important for studying Japanese. It has always been my dream to study abroad in Japan, and I was able to accomplish my dream thanks to Dr. Soga. From the bottom of my heart I am very grateful for the work you have put into this program and you will always be remembered for all of the wonderful things that you have done for us at WMU.

Clifford Robertson

I've been studying Japanese at Western Michigan since the spring semester of 2011. From that time, I have made many great friends and found a deeper appreciation for the language, culture and history of Japan. Without the work of Dr. Soga, and his dedication, I would have not had the opportunity to take the first steps into a brand new world. I believe that my future holds great things and because of his work, I am one step closer to that reality. I am grateful for the experiences that I have had in the Japanese program that he helped to set up. Thank you for all of your work and effort to make this possible. My best wishes to your family and to friends who knew you well.

Rachel Leblang

When I came to WMU I thought that Japanese would be something I studied on the side while I focused on Spanish. But the teachers and students of the Japanese department are some of the most incredible people I have ever met. So much so, that I don't even study Spanish anymore! If the Japanese program had not been created, I would never had met the friends that I cherish, or been able to learn so much about Japan. Now I am excited to learn Japanese every day and will be studying abroad in Kyoto next fall. This is all thanks to Dr. Soga's participation in Japanese studies. I am forever in his debt. Thanks to his contributions, I am happy to go to classes and continue to learn more about my passion.

Katrina Hummel

I really wish I could have met you. After my life got suddenly turned upside down, the only thing I could really devote myself to anymore was my love of Japan and the language. Without the support of everyone in the Japanese program that you created, I probably wouldn't have been able to continue doing what I love. Thank you for your legacy; you will be missed by many.



Stephen Michael

Dr. Soga has given a great gift to the students of WMU. Japan has always been a strong interest of mine and I was very excited when I found that I could major or minor in this wonderful language. I love East Asian history and thanks to Dr. Soga, WMU has one of the best programs I know of for Japanese studies. I am grateful that I have the opportunity to learn something I love as part of my curriculum. Moreover, it is something I use every day and that has become a window for personal growth and self-discovery. Thank you Dr. Soga. The students of WMU will do their best to carry on your good name.

Matthew Anderson

For the past 7 months I have been living in Japan and going to school in Tokyo. I've made many friends and met numerous people, seen a bunch of amazing sights, and have improved my Japanese a lot. I wouldn't be here without the work of Dr. Soga, so I'm very thankful to you. I send my love to the members of your family.

Kally Mullett

I'm so thankful to Dr. Soga for giving me the opportunity to pursue the Japanese language. He will always be remembered at WMU by the faculty and students who are able to do what they love because of him.

Ethan Moore

I have always loved Japanese culture and wanted to study it, but I never had a chance to access the knowledge that I was seeking. Then I came to WMU and not only saw that they had a Japanese program, and it was quite a strong one. That made very happy. Knowing that Dr. Soga put so much time and effort into making this program, I wish to thank him. I wish that I could have met him once in my life. So I look forward to continuing my studies in Japanese in the future as well as having Japanese culture because part in my life for the rest of my days. Many people will miss you for many years to come, Dr. Soga.

Omar Diaz

When I first came to WMU, I was very bored with my classes and I did not know what to do with my life. I was then given the idea to study Japanese by one of my friends. Not having anything better to do, I decided to take this challenge. After only one course in Japanese, I fell in love with the language. It was new, exciting, and took a lot of my time, but I enjoyed every second of learning. I then decided to study abroad in Japan. My experience abroad was life-changing. I learned a lot about myself, but more importantly, I learned what I wanted to do with my life. Thanks to Dr. Soga I was given this opportunity to study Japanese and live abroad. Thanks to his help I have decided to become a global citizen and work towards an international career. Now I am passionate about what I am going to school for and I am excited to learn more. I am forever in Dr. Soga's debt for the experience he made possible for me. Thank you, Dr. Soga.



Kaitlin Koto

One of the reasons that I came to WMU was because they had an established Japanese Studies program. I am an ethnomusicology major and WMU is actually the only university in America that offered both of my majors for a bachelor's degree for under \$30,000 a year. I am a music education and Japanese double major, and it's not easy to find schools that offer both programs. I am furthering my degree in traditional Japanese music and instruments, so Japanese classes play a vital role to my life goal, as I will soon be applying to graduate schools. Without this program, I would not be able to do anything I am doing today. Without Dr. Soga, none of this would have been possible, and I would not be able to prepare my degree at all. I am forever grateful for this opportunity created by Dr. Soga.

Colleen Flanagan

When I went to Japan, I had the time of my life. I met many new friends, learned many new things, and I wouldn't trade my experience there for the world. I'm happy now to be graduating this spring with a major in Japanese. I'm sad that I never got the chance to meet Soga-sensei, but I will be forever grateful to him for his hard work in giving me these chances. I send all of my love to his family and friends, and may Soga-sensei rest in peace.



Articles About Dr. Soga

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE December 7, 1991

‘All my childhood was under war’

EARLENE McMICHAEL

GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

Morning classes had been interrupted, and Michitoshi Soga and his classmates were told to report to the playground.

“I was sitting on the ground. The sky was blue—a very clear day,” recalled Soga, a Western Michigan University physics professor and administrator in the Office of International Affairs.

“The principal came on the podium and said, ‘We have a very unusual situation. The government declared war against the United States and Britain.’”

The principal did not say where the fighting was taking place, but Soga had heard an earlier radio report. Japan had thrust itself into war by bombing U.S. Navy operations in the South Pacific.

Soga was 15 years old and attending an all-boys school in Tokyo. That day, school officials had apparently rigged a radio to a public address system. War reports were broadcast into the playground.

Soga finally learned the exact battle site when an announcer revealed that Japan had “successfully” attacked Pearl Harbor.

“I shivered,” said Soga, 65. “If the war continued for the next three years, I’d be drafted. That would be it. I would have to be killed or die for the country.”

Not one student cheered. They sat in the playground for nearly two hours.

“Only one teacher... was clapping with no sound. I don’t know why,” Soga said, demonstrating the instructor’s clapping motion, palms repeatedly moving toward one another but never meeting.

Before Soga had left for school, he heard about the war on the radio. “My family was scared,” he said. “There was a very high tension. We knew the power of the United States and Britain.”

Even more memorable for Soga was the train ride to school that morning.

“I still remember people’s faces,” Soga said. “Nobody was laughing. Very tight faces. Everybody was so quiet. Everybody had difficulty accepting the fact that a big war started, a dangerous war started.”

Soga, the son of a wealthy patent lawyer, was familiar with America.

As a result of his business dealings, Soga’s father had friends around the world. He remembered his father’s ties with America being immediately severed after the Pearl Harbor attack that left 2,403 Americans dead.

But the tide changed just as quickly for his father once America was returned to the power position.

One month after the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, killing 200,000 people, Soga’s father received a letter from an old friend in Pittsburgh inquiring about whether they could resume their business relationship. They eventually did.



The U.S. banned sales to Japan of gasoline, especially high-octane aviation fuel, iron and steel and had frozen Japan's American assets, making it impossible for it to pay for oil imports. Japan lost 80 percent of its oil supplies.

President Franklin Roosevelt refused to negotiate With Japan until it ceased occupation of China, Manchuria and Southwest Asia, forcing Japan to use alternative fuel sources. Soga said a gasoline substitute was made from pine trees and charcoal was converted to gasoline.

When Soga was a student, a nationalistic spirit pervaded Japan. He remembers being taught that war was a proper means of obtaining an end.

The necessary end in China was raw materials, Soga said he was told. So Japan invaded it. "I thought that was reasonable—in other words, brain-washed," he said. "All my childhood was under war."

Three years after the bombing of Pearl Harbor—the year was 1944—Soga remembers Tokyo being bombed around-the-clock. His school and many others shut their doors.

Soga went to work for a firm that made wartime electronic equipment. He and the other

workers often slept at the factories overnight.

But a change of plans on March 9, 1945, altered his view on war forever. Soga, who worked in the firm's headquarters, was dispatched to a branch factory to talk about a new product.

This day, Soga opted to go home after work. After boarding his train, he said, air raid sirens sounded and blazes could be seen at the factory.

The next morning, he and another worker were sent to check on the branch factory—a seven-hour walk away because the trains were not running.

"Everywhere dead bodies. Human beings. Horses. Cats. Dogs," Soga recalled.

Bodies were stacked along the steps to an elevated train. The bones of some of the dead were exposed.

Once at their destination, Soga learned none of the factory workers survived.

"I told my friend, 'This is war. It's a terrible thing. It kills innocent people,'" Soga said. "War is not beautiful. We were told war is a very manlike behavior. But it's not right."



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE February 23, 1992

In new world order, Japan rises toward the top

TOM CHMMIELEWSKI

GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

Japan is one of America's oldest friends and one of its oldest enemies. It may become even more of both as the new century approaches.

As is common in international politics, and particularly with Japan, relations are shaded by contradictory issues. Embittered feelings are likely to grow between the United States and Japan, but so will the economic interdependence between the two countries.

Japan represents a new balance of power, where once Japan was rebuilt and supported as part of a U.S. policy of containment against communism, now it's a competitor with the United States. But its competition with the United States leaves military might and ideology behind. It's simply a matter of how to make a buck, whether it's a yen or a dollar.

Yet relations between Japan and the United States are strained as people from both countries struggle to understand each other, and themselves.

"Outsiders tend to envy Japan and its successes," said Ahmed Hussen,



'We need Japan. Japan needs us ... We are so interwoven already. We cannot separate anymore. Not only Japan, the world is too interactive.'

Michitoshi Soga

a resource economist at Kalamazoo College who recently returned from a year of teaching and studying in Japan.

"We can't help but be impressed."

But while the Japanese recognize their own successes, "deep inside they are very insecure," he said.

Hussen suggests "they feel insecure because Japanese psychologically are not prepared for what happened to them. They are astonished at the success they've had."

Since the disaster of World War II, Japan has grown to become "the second largest economy in the world, next to the United States. They do not know how to react to that success"

Indeed, Hussen said Japanese "still think they are a poor nation." He said that feeling is reinforced in the schooling, in housing, and in a social standard that makes "modesty very important to them."

Michitoshi Soga, a physics professor at Western Michigan University,

agreed with that observation. Soga was born and raised in Tokyo, but first came to the United States, in the early '60s to do research

in physics. He's been at WMU for 15 years.

But on his yearly trips back to the country of his birth, "I have to behave like a Japanese. I'm an American now." He leaned forward and slumped his shoulders to mimic the persona that seems to automatically take over as a jetliner brings him near the island nation. It's a persona he eagerly sheds after a two-week stay.

Hussen also points out that, despite its success in industry, the country itself is poor in natural resources. "They depend on almost 90 percent of their resources, basically all of their resources, from the outside."

Those factors of psychology, culture and lack of natural resources combine to prevent Japan from wearing the mantle of world power well.

"They really, truly, don't want to be a world leader," Hussen said. "They don't mind giving money," as Japan did during the Gulf War.



Hussen thinks some of that lack of international leadership comes about because the “Japanese government doesn’t have much power,”

He describes a political system with one dominant party but a number of factions that tug and pull at the nation’s interests. “In general the Japanese government is really unstable.”

And while Japan took the world stage in World War II, it was as a conqueror, not as a leader, Hussen said.

“I just don’t know under what condition Japan will willingly try to participate in world politics,” he said. “They don’t have a tradition, Japan has only one tradition, that is to conquer so that they have raw materials. They never had a tradition to influence other countries, like the U.S. has had”

A Jack of experience in international diplomacy has fueled feelings of resentment, but Soga said both Japanese and American need to understand the importance of each other.

“We need Japan.” Soga said, “Japan needs us.”

Soga also serves as an administrative officer for WMU’s office of international affairs, and sees the Japanese students that study at the university. Despite stories of Japan overtaking the United States, Soga said America is still held in high esteem in Japan in such area as higher education.

And he cautions that nationalistic fervor can be out of place as

international politics and economics enter a new era.

“We are so interwoven a ready,” he said. “We cannot separate anymore. Not only Japan, the world is too interactive.”

In particular, Soga describes relations with all of the Pacific Rim as important to the world economy.

“It’s just catching up,” Soga said of Korea, Malaysia and other nations connected by the Pacific Ocean. “The Pacific Rim came in history very late.”

Of strong importance in that region, Soga said, are the relations between Japan and China.

“Japan and China, that is a long history,” Soga said, and often a bloody one. But as China struggles with economic reforms and political strife, Japan has made inroads to the Communist country. “Japan and China have a very strong relationship.”

Many of Japan’s economic ties with Pacific Rim nation ironically are coming about through practices begun in the United States and criticized by the Japanese.

In particular, Hussen cited “the American practice ...of going to another country to produce materials, of GM having a plant in Korea or Taiwan,” making parts for a product assembled later here. “They used to be disgusted by that kind of experience, they used to call it hollowing.”

It had been the Japanese practice of keeping all that work under one

corporate roof, but U.S. quotas and the rising cost of labor in Japan forced the Japanese countries to follow the American lead and set up plants in other countries.

“Ever since, they have plants all over the world,” Hussen said. “They have to produce the goods cheap. The wage there in Japan is very high now. One way to get around that is to go to Taiwan, to Korea, Malaysia, and all these kinds of places.”

Hussen has no doubt that “in the next 10 to 20 years, Japan is going to be one of the dominant economic powers” in the world.

“Just imagine that this is a country that is under 25 million populations. At its current level it produces 10 percent of the world’s goods. The United States is roughly about 20 percent right now.” Yet Japan “contains only 0.3 percent of the world’s land mass.”



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE Thursday, September 12, 1974

WMU Educator Escapes Explosion By Minutes

If he had been five minutes slower, a Western Michigan University associate professor of physics might not be alive today.

Dr. Michjtioshi Soga was in Tokyo recently to pick up a research grant. He left the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Building five minutes before a terrorist's bomb ripped through the lobby and front of the building.

"It still scares me to think about it," Soga said. "I came so close to almost being killed."

At least seven persons were killed and more than 120 injured. Most of the victims were slashed by deadly slivers of flying glass.

Soga was in the office building Aug. 30 to convince the president of the Mitsubishi Foundation to finance a nuclear physics study he is working on here with a fellow WMU professor.

After explaining his research proposal, Soga was given the green light for the grant. Before he could get the money, he had to go to the

Japan Bank for authorization to take \$10,000, or \$3 million yen, out of the country.

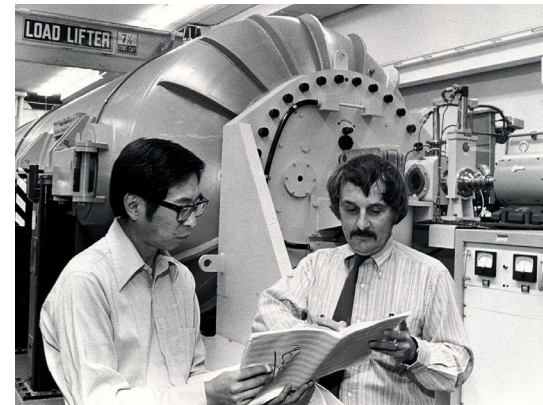
When proper forms were completed, Soga returned to the Mitsubishi Building to pick up the cash.

"After I was given the money, I went downstairs to the outside, walked about a block and got a taxi," Soga said. "We had driven about five minutes when I heard an explosion."

"At first I thought a heavy truck had blown a tire, but then I heard ambulances and fire engines coming from all over," he said.

After the taxi took him to his mother's house, Soga went inside to watch television. That's when he learned the unsettling news he had just walked away from a disaster in fee nick of time,

"All programs on the television were stopped and films were being shown of the building," Soga said. "I didn't expect such a large bomb. The extent of the damage amazed



SOGA CHECKS RESEARCH PLANS WITH
GENE BERNSTEIN

Soga Walked Out Of Building Minutes Before Bomb Blast
-Gazette Photo

me.

Force of the blast shattered every window in the front of the Mitsubishi Building. Windows were blown out of buildings blocks away.

That night, Soga retimed to the United States. At the Tokyo airport, police blocked every exit and stopped each passenger in search of the bombers.

"It will be a long time before I want to go back to Japan," Soga said. "Kalamazoo is a much safer place."



“Bridge Builder”

Retired WMU Faculty Member Promotes Stronger Educational Ties with Japan

By Dave Person

Kalamazoo Gazette, Generations [Supplement],
November 25, 2006, p. 12-13

His own education interrupted by war, Michitoshi Soga has dedicated himself to working toward educational opportunities and understanding between his native Japan and the United States, where he has spent most of his adult life.

“Understanding a different culture is very important,” said Soga, 80, a retired physics professor and international affairs administrator at Western Michigan University.

Though he’s been retired since 1993, he continues to work toward that goal of understanding. In September, he was present at the dedication of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center in the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education at WMU.

“It’s a tremendous honor for me,” Soga said.

Howard Dooley, WMU professor of history and former international affairs administrative officer, said Soga is an “informal bridge builder” between the two countries.

“He’s kind of the master go-between, the academic diplomat extraordinaire,” Dooley said.

“The focus (of the new Soga Japan Center) is research by scholars here and study by WMU students about Japan... and, most importantly, in Japan.”

Soga set three goals for himself when he began

working in international affairs at Western in 1987.

First, he wanted to solidify good relations with Keio University in Tokyo, which had begun sending students to WMU in the early 1960s.

The relationship was strengthened when, in 1989, WMU President Diether Haenicke hosted Keio University President Tadao Ishikawa and the university awarded him an honorary degree in public administration.

Keio University served as host four years later when Haenicke paid a visit there. Soga’s second goal was to send at least 20 WMU students per year to Japan to study. He also was successful in accomplishing that dream.

A third goal, establishment of a Japanese language major at WMU, went unfulfilled, however. But now, with the addition of the Japan Center, he said, that dream has new life.

“I think this is a good chance to start a Japanese major,” Soga said.

Soga was a 15-year old student in Japan when the country attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

At that time, war was all Soga knew, from Japan’s invasion of Manchuria when he was 5 to its re-entry into China six years later.

Memories of his childhood, Soga said, are “all war, year after year.”

Eligible for military service at age 19, Soga was convinced he would become just another casualty of war.

“I truly thought my life (would) end at age 20,” he said.

“I was drafted and was supposed to join the Army in



September (1945). But the war ended Aug. 15, so I didn't go," he said.

The United States had punished Japan with bombing raids, something Soga will never forget, especially the relentless attacks on Tokyo late on March 10, 1945.

"I lost many friends that night," Soga said.

After the war, Soga became a physicist in Japan until President John F. Kennedy, in an attempt to catch up to the Soviet Union in the space race, "sent message to young physicists all over the world to come to the United States," Soga said.

He answered the call in 1961 and went to work at the National Laboratory in Chicago. Four years later, he took a position at the Ben Franklin Institute in Philadelphia.

But he wanted to do more than research.

"I was looking for a place to teach," he said.

In 1968, "Western decided to build an accelerator... so I came here," he said.

Nineteen years later, Norman Greenberg, then WMU's dean of international education, "invited me to join the international office," Soga said. "At first, I hesitated because I like physics very much.... But not many people know how to start (a) Japanese program."

As was his plan, Soga expanded the exchange program with Keio University.

"Since then it still continues today," Soga said of the program that has become the longest-running exchange program for both universities.

"He is so low-key, self-effacing, yet he can be so persuasive," Dooley said. "He's the master of bringing people together.

"I've noticed that when we are in Japan... or when we

have visitors (from Japan), he merits the very deepest bows."

In retirement, Michitoshi and Ryoko Soga, his wife of 51 years, return to Japan about once a year.

They also visit their three married sons, all Kalamazoo Central High School graduates, and their families in the United States annually.

Michio, the oldest, went to Dartmouth College and Yale University. A former investment banker, he now lives in Princeton, N.J. and enjoys mountain-climbing.

Michiaki went to Kalamazoo College and then to Sierra Leone as a member of the Peace Corps. He attended graduate school at the University of Missouri and now is an editor at the Barrington (Vt.) Free Press.

Michitaka, the youngest, studied architecture at the University of Oregon and now lives in Seattle.

"My son spent three years in Japan to study architecture, and when he came back he designed this," Soga said of his and Ryoko's Kalamazoo home, which has incorporated many Japanese features, such as paper chandeliers, and chains—rather than downspouts—to channel water off the roof.

Soga relaxes by reading, mostly books in Japanese, and watching television. He uses a satellite dish to bring in some of his favorite programs from Japan.

But Soga is loyal to both Japan and the United States.

"He's very proud of both," Dooley said. "He says, 'I'm an American made in Japan.'"





Dr. Soga's Speech on Receiving an Honorary Degree from Josai University in Japan

September 30, 2008

Congratulations to the freshmen and the graduating students. On this special occasion, I received an unimagined honor from your university and I am deeply moved. I believe that this honor was given not only to me, but to all of us associated with Western Michigan University. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Chancellor, the President and the entire Josai University community.

I offer my hearty congratulation to all of the students who stand at the gate of the next stage of their lives by asking two important questions. I assume all of you have some expectations and plans in your future at this special moment. This seems to me very natural and very good. I don't want to discourage you. However, from my experience in life, I would like to tell you that a life does not necessarily happen as expected, but rather as a succession of unexpected events. Allow me to speak a little about my life of 80-plus years.

I was born in Tokyo on 1926 when the Taisho era changed to the Showa era. At the age of 18, I experienced the defeat of the war. During those 18 years, Japan waged a succession of wars on foreign soil, such as the Manchurian incident, the Shanghai incident, the Sino-Japan war, the Nomonhan incident and the Second World War. There was the 5-15 terrorism incident, the 2-26 coup d'etat and the general national mobilization of the government controlled by the military. History was moving with a will of its own. During the last two years before Japan's defeat, I was a middle school student (today what would be a high school freshman and sophomore). I suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis and was absent from school for one year. When I returned to the school, there were no classes, and all students were working at factories. I worked at Sumitomo electric company at Mita, Tokyo. Because of my illness, I was given a desk job instead of manual labor. My job in the purchase division was essentially as a liaison between the main company and the many small subcontract factories. On March 10, 1945, I experienced the great Tokyo air raid. The night before, I visited one of the subcontractors located near Kameido JR station, where about 180 people were working. I discussed a production schedule, as usual, and dined with workers in the dining hall, then said good bye and went home. All those people with whom I had been working with only the night before went missing after the air raid that night by about 300 B-29 U. S. bombers. The next day, I went looking for the company and walked the area ruined by the fire. It was a horrible scene. I crossed a river where I could not see water because so many dead bodies covered the water's surface. I saw a dead dog, horse and men piled together on the steps of Kameido station. Yet I found the company's products inside a shelter without any damage. This is not an experience I can recommend to anyone.

I was drafted and ordered to report to the military station in the middle of September, but Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration on August 15 and signed the Document of Surrender without Condition on the Battleship Missouri on September 2; I never had to take up a weapon in the war. However, I believed without doubt that my life ended at the age of 20 years.



Once the war ended, many people suddenly became pacifists. Why did we fight this war with such enormous human cost? I was very confused for a long time. Schools began classes and we took to our studies like a starving man takes to food. But Japan was defeated in war and was occupied by a foreign military for the first time in her history. There was no food, no jobs, and people's hearts were hardened. The occupation continued about six years. A new war started on the Korean peninsula. Because of this war, Japan signed a peace treaty with all countries, except those in the Communist region, at the San Francisco opera house on September, 1951. The occupation ended, and Japan regained her status as an independent nation. Japan continued to sign peace treaties with many countries, except two: Russia, which was then the Soviet Union; and, North Korea, which had been a Japanese colony. Under the principles of international law, Japan and those two countries are still in a state of war.

After regaining its independence, Japan officially kicked off its recovery—an economic miracle which amazed the whole world. I studied theoretical physics and during my doctorate studies, I married Ryoko (October 2, 2008 is our 53rd anniversary). A short time later I received a doctor of natural science degree (Ph.D.) and was hired as an assistant in the Physics Department of a national university in Tokyo.

A few years later, I experienced the year 1960, which is known as “ANPO NO TOSHI”, which means the year of the anti US-Japan Security Treaty. A huge number of students, workers and ordinary people gathered and surrounded the National Diet building every day and night to express their opposition to the ratification of the Treaty. As an assistant, I was assigned to participate with students in the demonstrations twice a week or three times every two weeks and went to the National Diet building. The atmosphere was unbelievable. A Tokyo University student, Ms. Michiko Kanba, was killed by a skirmish with police one night. I could understand the students' sentiment, but at the same time, I was puzzled that the time when they should be studying was mostly being wasted in this manner.

Meanwhile, the American government was hard at work on a new space program, but had failed to launch a satellite. On 1957, the Soviets succeeded in launching “Sputnik” in space. The American government was bitterly worried about it, and President Kennedy invited scientists throughout the free world to come and study in the United States or to join the U.S. Space program. Responding to Kennedy's call, many young scientists came to the United States from all over the world.

In Japan, too, many good scientists left the country for the United States. Even though I was not among our nation's best scientists, I also decided to grab on to the tail end of this opportunity to work at an American National Laboratory and was granted a one year's leave of absence from the Ministry of Education. During the war, I was taught that the “American and British are brutal”. Also, we were completely defeated by them. I could not imagine visiting America, even for one year to study. At that time, Japan had a huge deficit in its balance of international payment. The exchange rate was fixed at \$1.00 = ¥360.00. The maximum amount money one could take out Japan was \$50.00 (not \$500.00), in Japanese yen ¥18,000.00. We left Japan for America with \$200.00 in my pocket. The airplane we flew from Haneda Airport was a propeller plane, and could not fly directly to Hawaii. It had to stop at Wake Island to refuel, then flew to Hawaii. We went through Immigration at the airport in Honolulu, and then we flew on the same plane to San Francisco. We stayed overnight there and the next morning we flew to Chicago. The journey took two days.

We went to stay in a guest house of the national laboratory. There was a pond at the front of the guest house. Many wild flowers were in bloom around the pond. Tall trees were scattered about and underneath was green grass. For us who came



from a ruined Tokyo, this place was like dream. We found an abundant variety of food in the cafeteria. People moved about calmly and without haste. They treated us, who came from a small Asian country, with a warm heart.

The research I started there with three American physicists was time-consuming work. It was not a project that could be finished in one year. However, I never dreamed at that time that after almost 50 years, we would still be living in America. During this period, my wife continuously helped me and taught Japanese to our three children even though we could not obtain any Japanese school books. I am grateful for her endless efforts. While we were there we observed the Cuban missile crisis, which was a hair-trigger crisis between the U.S. and Soviet Union. In 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

After that, we moved to a private research laboratory in the East Coast and spent a few years there. Finally, in 1968 we moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan and I got the teaching job which I was looking for at Western Michigan University. The city of Kalamazoo is a quiet small country town. From 1904 to 1905, one of Japan's master writers, Kafu Nagai studied there, and even now his boarding house still survives. Therefore, Kalamazoo is no stranger to Japan. The year 1968 was also a turmoil-filled year. Reverend Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee; President Kennedy's younger brother, Robert Kennedy, was shot to death in California. The war in Vietnam was becoming quicksand, sucking in a leg.

I received tenure at Western Michigan University and resigned from the Japanese University. During the next 28 years, between 1968 through 1996 when I retired from WMU, I lectured on physics in broken English, did research work with experimental physicists and also worked in the Office of International Affairs. In the last post, I came to know many foreign universities and their exchange students. I particularly treasure my acquaintanceship with Japanese universities, research laboratories and exchange students. During that time I came to know Josai University, Josai International University and Josai Women's Jr. College. I still vividly remember the day when former Chancellor Seiko Mizuta and Chancellor Noriko Mizuta visited the WMU campus and signed the agreement between two institutions.

In 1996, I turned 70 years old and decided to retire from WMU and received the title of emeritus professor in physics. Since then, I and my wife, Ryoko, have enjoyed a quiet retired life in a house in the woods which was designed and built by one of our sons, who became an architect. I have read many books which I could not find time to read before, and attended concerts and sports events of the university. Even the biggest terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, was confined to New York, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania and did not do actual damage to the rural town of Kalamazoo.

However, unexpected events came about once again. On December, 2005 almost 10 years after my retirement, the WMU Board of Trustee voted to establish the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center on the WMU campus, and the center officially opened in July, 2006. Now, many excellent young Japanology experts are studying religion, history, literature, society, economics, political science and so forth through the Center. In September of the same year, WMU organized a party to celebrate the establishment of the center at the campus and many people from the Japanese Consulate, Japanese businesses, universities and others gathered, where Professor Ryu read a congratulation letter from Chancellor Noriko Mizuta of the Josai University Cooperation. In 2007, a similar party was held in Tokyo. A large number of people, mainly former exchange students, came from Hokkaido in the north, Okinawa in the south and other places from all over Japan. At this gathering, WMU once again announced a new scholarship for Japanese students, named the Michitoshi Soga Presidential Scholarship. It was also a big surprise to me. And this year, 2008, I received an unimaginable honor from Josai University and now am standing at this podium. This is the short version of the story of the 82-year-life of Michitoshi Soga.



Through this story, I wanted to show you that a life does not proceed as scheduled or planned. When you encounter an unexpected event, don't complain that it is not what was promised, and face it with strong character and strong will.

For those of you just starting your college life, set your sights high in your chosen field, be it in academics, sports, the arts, or any other area. Give it your full measure and do not fear failure. When you do experience failure, learn from the experience. Failure at a young age is just like a knot of bamboo. Bamboo is strong because of the knots. A person who never experiences any failures and grows on a railway designed by parents will be broken easily when the person meets a storm just like a bamboo without knots. I have seen this type of people. I don't want you become to this type of person.

Also, a person who experiences failure will understand other people's pain. It will help you grow as a human being.

Those of you who are graduating, the world you are entering is in chaos now: energy and food, environment and health, world population, war and peace among the races or among religions. If you look at Japan, an aging society with few children, inequality in income, ethics and laws that can't keep up with new technologies, etc., all of these areas have come to a crisis. In other words, you have an opportunity to contribute significantly to what you want to do in the world. In order to survive in the world, you must have a strong character as mentioned above, but that is not sufficient. In future you will definitely encounter situations in which you must make choices. The road branches into two and you have to choose one road. The final decision will come from your values. Therefore you must have a just sense of values. To obtain this you must always ask yourself, "what is the most important thing in my life?" It could lead you to a destination which is not prosperous in the common sense. However, even if this were the case, you will not regret it because you were not forced to take the road by others, but you chose the path.

Money might be important. You may want power. However you should not be controlled by these things—rather you should control them. You should build such a society. Make Japan just, bright and energetic. Make the world peaceful for everybody.

I wish for you two things: to have a strong character and just values. These two things are my words of congratulation to all of you.

I am sincerely grateful to everyone for inviting me to this happiest of occasions and for giving me an unimagined honor.

Thank you very much for listening.

Michitoshi Soga



Michitoshi Soga Lifeline

September 17, 1926, born in Tokyo, Japan

1953, receives a bachelor's degree in physics, Gakushuin University, Tokyo

1955, receives a master's degree in nuclear physics, Gakushuin University (studied under Professor Mokichiro Nogami)

October 2, 1955, marries Ryoko Nishi

July 20, 1956, first son, Michio, is born

1958, receives doctorate in theoretical physics from the Department of Science at Tokyo University of Education (studied under Professor Shinichiro Tomonaga, a future Nobel laureate in physics, and Professor Tatsuoki Miyajima). Begins work as an assistant in the Department of Physics, the Faculty of Science and Engineering, Tokyo Institute of Technology and continues to study nuclear physics under Professor Hisashi Horie.

July 27, 1958, second son, Michiaki, is born

August 1961, leaves for the United States with family to conduct research at the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois after being granted a one-year leave of absence by the university and Ministry of Education.

1962, granted a one-year extension on his leave of absence.

July 1963, returns to Japan.

November 18, 1963, third son, Michitaka, is born.

May 1964, returns to Argonne alone to complete research projects. Travels to England, France, Germany and Israel on way back to Japan to present his research.

November 1965, takes another leave of absence from the institute to work at the Bartol Foundation of the Franklin Institute in Swarthmore, Pa.



1968, accepts tenure-track position with Department of Physics, Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, Mich. Resigns from Tokyo Institute of Technology.

May 1979, becomes a U.S. citizen.

1979, takes sabbatical from WMU and accepts invitation from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science to become a visiting professor at the Department of Physics, College of Sciences, Tsukuba University, Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan.

1987, assumes additional duties in the WMU Office of International Affairs as an advisor for Japanese relations.

1993, retires from the Department of Physics, named emeritus professor in physics. Continues to work in the Office of International Affairs as a fulltime advisor.

1996, full retirement from WMU.

2005, WMU Board of Trustees establishes the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center; Center is inaugurated on July 1, 2006.

September 2008, named commencement/inaugural speaker and awarded honorary doctorate from Josai University, Tokyo, Japan.

August 2010, awarded the Foreign Minister' Commendation by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs for his contribution to the promotion of friendly relations between Japan and other countries.

March 3, 2013, dies at his home in Kalamazoo at the age of 86.



Soga Japan Center

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