

Preface

It gives me great pleasure to write this Preface for the special issue of *Heterocycles* dedicated to Shô Itô's 77th birthday, born December 15, 1924*. I will only briefly refer to his international reputation and academic achievements since Professor Hirama summarizes them in this volume. The long list of contributors to this issue from ten countries also reflects his popularity as a respected teacher and friend. In the following I portray some personal accounts.

I start with a friendly criticism regarding his name, which has been a headache for everyone. But at this stage is too late to rectify. Namely, the ^ symbols on his alphabet name is a typist's nightmare because it cannot be found in a straightforward manner and hence is frequently added manually. Moreover, to make matters worse, the Japanese character for Shô does not exist at all. When his father registered Shô's birth date and name at the local Tokyo office, his father wrote 檄 instead of the intended 檄, which itself is already very complex. Namely, the middle and right sections of the character is wrong, and thus it is new and original. The type does not exist, and therefore has to be ignored in official documents and be written manually unless a new type is made as Shô had done when making his name card.

I met Shô for the first time in the fall of 1959 at Yokohama harbor where he disembarked from a ship with the late Toshio Goto with whom he was returning from postdoctoral stays with Wiesner (New Brunswick) and Woodward (Cambridge). I remember being impressed by his unusually fluent English (for a Japanese native) as he chatted with an attractive American lady. He returned to Sendai to rejoin Nozoe's group, became an associate professor, then professor at Tohoku University, retired in 1988, and became dean of the faculty of pharmaceutical sciences at Tokushima Bunri University in Shikoku until his recent retirement. His research covered a very broad field in organic chemistry, structure determination and synthesis of natural products, syntheses / reactions / theoretical treatment of nonbenzenoid aromatic compounds, and development of spectroscopic methods. He served on the bureau of IUPAC and for many years was the regional editor for *Tetrahedron Letters*.

In the fall of 1962, he was the guest at our Japanese style house in Hayama (a residential resort at Zushi beach). Here he brought the message from Nozoe inquiring whether I would be interested in moving to Sendai from Tokyo Kyoiku University (located in central Tokyo; this is now Tsukuba University in Ibaraki Prefecture). The organic division in Sendai, started by Riko Majima, was traditionally considered the center of organic chemistry in the Science Faculty in

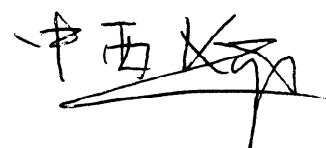
Japan, Nozoe and Fujise were the two professors, and Fujise was to retire. I was honored by this prestigious offer and accepted it – later Nozoe joked and said I was the first fish to get caught by his fishing line. My stay in Sendai from 1963 to 1969 was only a short six years but it was certainly very colorful. Shô, Tetsuji Kametani (founder of *Heterocycles*), Yoshio Kitahara, Tetsuo Kato, Toshio Mukai, Kunio Seto, Shinichi Sasaki, Akira Yoshikoshi, Hisashi Uda, Masao Maruyama, and others were all there, and we would go to bar “Silk” around 10 pm or later from the lab and spend hours merrily and loudly talking nonsense. In terms of academic achievements, it was a most productive period where my group worked on chromomycins, lampterol, taxinine, ginkgolides, ponasterones and other phytoecdysteroids, meiosis inducing substance of starfish, finding of NOE, benzoate chirality method, etc. With Shô and others, we started in 1960 a Gordon conference type summer conference which continues to this day; the active and loudly organic group in Sendai certainly facilitated organizing symposia as well as drinking parties.

Shô's organizational talent and personality made Tokushima Bunri, a local private college focused on pharmacognosy, into an active and superbly equipped center of organic research, where many international symposia were organized and overseas visitors would visit. I also participated in the 1988 summer Natural Products Symposium (and the crazy “Awa-odori” or Awa dance, in which people dance and chant in ecstasy), a symposium on the occasion of inauguration of new labs, and others - all connected with fond memories, especially the seafood and sake. I was highly impressed with Shô's achievements as dean when I served as a member of the external advisory board recently. He was instrumental in the dramatic metamorphosis at the pharmaceutical faculty, ranging from curriculum, evaluation by students, faculty appointments, and public relations.

It is a pity that Shô has decided to leave Japan and immigrate to Calgary. After losing his wife several years ago, he was leading a bachelor's life (with occasional cooking help by students). He is attached to Canada, partly due to his love for skiing and mountaineering, but the major motivation is to join the family of his two sons, successful in the culinary business, in Calgary and in New Brunswick. However, he still has to wait for his permanent status visa. He found that it is easier of parents to invite children, but time-consuming the other way around. Relax as usual, and enjoy life in Tokushima before leaving Japan.

*I was born in May 11, 1925, half a year later than Shô. *Heterocycles* very kindly put out a special issue for my 75th, but was published prematurely in January 1998, **47**, no.1. With a complaint for me, it was published with the ingenious subtitle of a “pre-celebration of his 75th

birthday". I take this opportunity to sincerely thank Professor Keiichiro Fukumoto (editor), Koichi Kametani (publisher), and the many many friends who graciously contributed articles to that issue. I remember when Kame-san (the late Tetsuji Kametani) invited my wife and me to a restaurant in New York, told us about launching the journal *Heterocycles*, and asked our opinion regarding the current black cover of the journal just designed by his son Koichi.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized Japanese characters and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Koji Nakanishi

Department of Chemistry, Columbia University, U. S. A.