

Good-bye, Professor Uchida

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When a mild breeze of early spring carries a fragrance of *ume-no-hana* (plum blossoms) into our pensive mind of winter, the bliss of fragrance is sometimes interrupted by another sadness. Professor Takehiko Uchida has now run his full course and will retire from his chair in March, 2003, leaving the Faculty of International Communication.

My acquaintance with Professor Uchida began 16 years ago, when I came to Toyohashi for interview for employment. On a day of February, 1987, I left Akita, where I lived in those days, early in the morning. The train bound for Morioka crossed the Japanese archipelago in the snow, and when it approached Morioka, the terminal, the snow had stopped, and the weather had changed into that of clear sky, which is typical to the *Taiheiyo-gawa* (Pacific side). From Morioka I traveled under the blue sky along the seashore of the *Taiheiyo* all the way southward to Aichi University, Toyohashi. There, Professor Uchida was waiting for me. It was warm, very unlike the weather of the *Nihonkai-gawa* (side of the Sea of Japan). So different is the weather between the *Nihonkai-gawa* and the *Taiheiyo-gawa*. I found that the difference may be likened to that between the world of *Beowulf* and that of *the Canterbury Tales*.

As I look back upon the sixteen years of my association with Professor Uchida, the first thing I remember is that Professor Uchida was popular among both students and faculty members.

It seems that he was popular because he was kind to them; he was always willing to help everyone who came to him for help. His smile and good humour may be another factor of his popularity. Those characteristics of him must have attracted the people around him. Furthermore, Professor Uchida likes talking — sometimes, to such an extent that people may think him loquacious. I well remember those occasions of long talk on the phone; first time we talked for about 5 minutes then he rang off, which is quite normal, nothing unusual, but then several minutes later he rang me again, talking for about 40 minutes, and then, several minutes later, he rang me again and the final talk followed for about 10 minutes. His reading was of wide range, and he had a wide range of interest, which was reflected on the various topics of the telephone conversation, or maybe the discussion on the phone. I also remember our

discussions during the faculty meetings. The topic of our talk, or discussion, had nothing to do with the agenda of the meetings. Professor Uchida arbitrarily (it seems to me so) chose the topic and talked to me. One day, during the faculty meeting, he suddenly said to me, “Tamoto-san, why is the word *also* placed after the verb *was*, not before it?” His question referred to the word-order in the famous *Canterbury Tales*: “Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioress, That of hir smylyng was ful simple and coy” (General Prologue, 118–19).

Finally I must close my words by quoting an etymological phrase “May God be with ye, Professor Uchida”, from which is derived Modern English “Good-bye, Professor Uchida”.