

Professor Eichi Kobayashi

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Professor Eichi Kobayashi's career at ICU spans 42 years. Fresh out of Shinshu University, he started as an Assistant in April 1954. In those early years he worked closely with Professor Arthur P. McKenzie in the Freshman English Program. To realize just what that task involved it's important to know a bit about McKenzie. He had been born of missionary parents in Japan and had had a long career at Kwansai Gakuin before coming to help start ICU. I never met the man but, in my early days at KG, he was still referred to by older members of the staff as Lieutenant McKenzie. He had served in the Canadian army during World War I, but I got the impression that he retained his rank, at least behind his back, for his manner of dealing with subordinates. However, Kobayashi-sensei seems to have hit it off well with McKenzie. Perhaps his good relationship with McKenzie was because he was able to pass the English test McKenzie administered to him when they first met. According to Kobayashi-sensei, the test consisted of McKenzie speaking rapidly in English with his pipe firmly between his teeth while he was picking up a paper he had dropped on the floor. Kobayashi-sensei not only passed the test but continued to deal with McKenzie in English. In fact, Kobayashi-sensei often tells the story of having worked with McKenzie for a whole academic year before learning that he was completely fluent in Japanese. His point in telling the story has always been to impress

upon the non-Japanese teachers, especially those assigned to the English Language Program, that, even if we can mumble along in Japanese, we should never use Japanese in front of the students. However, there is another point to the story of his first year with McKenzie that Kobayashi-sensei is too modest to point out. Although Kobayashi-sensei was a young man right out of college and had never been abroad, his command of English, even in 1954, was good enough that McKenzie could train this new teacher without ever having to use Japanese with him. Kobayashi-sensei once told me that he had to use his English for practical communication even while he was a university student. One summer he had a part-time job working in the Nojiriko Hotel in Shinanomachi which attracted a number of visitors from the Kokusai mura across the lake. Since there was at that time no running water in Kokusai mura, the foreigners who spent their summers there often went to have a bath at the Nojiriko Hotel or those on the slopes of Mt. Myoko in neighboring Niigata Prefecture. The other hotels in the area were all onsen and some of the foreign guests acted as if the Nojiriko Hotel was too. It fell to young Eichi Kobayashi to write the signs in English explaining that fuel had to be consumed to heat the water for the bath and that guests should not waste that water. We can assume his signs were grammatically accurate because they received no comment, and most important, communicative because the wasteful use of bath water ended.

In 1957 Kobayashi-sensei had the opportunity to go to the United States for graduate study. He entered the University of Michigan and the following year received his MA. After a year at the University of Toronto, he returned to Ann Arbor and completed his Ed D degree in 1961. His thesis was entitled "A Study of Verb Forms of the South English Legendary in the British Museum MS Harley 2277." That same year he returned to Japan and resumed his teaching at ICU, but this time at the rank of Instructor.

Two years later he was promoted to Assistant Professor and, in 1967, became Associate Professor. The same year marked the beginning of his service to ICU as an administrator. For the next several years, some of the most turbulent in ICU history I'm told, he served as Chairperson of the Language Division. In 1973 he was promoted to full Professor. He served again as Chairperson of the Language Division during the 1980ies. In the 1971 he was sent to the University of California as exchange director. He spent the year, which he remembers fondly, advising our students and teaching the history of English to students at U.C. Santa Barbara.

He and Mrs. Kobayashi have lived on the campus during their years at ICU. They served as dorm parents in their early years and have used their present home to welcome students and staff. I can still remember being invited to dinner there when I was new to ICU and spending a very enjoyable evening learning about ICU's good (and sometimes bad) old days. But my strongest impression of their house is of the beautiful hydrangea planted all around it. Kobayashi-sensei, too modest to admit the care he had lavished on them, commented that they were not at their best that year, but they were the most beautiful I had ever seen. Apparently there were others who agree with me because pictures of those flowers have graced university publications.

Kobayashi-sensei joined the Graduate School of Education in 1965 and has been the mentor to several generations of students who found his love for the study of the history of the English language so contagious that they were willing to endure the demanding task of completing an MA or Ph.D. thesis under his guidance. In recent years he has had to teach the lion's share of the courses, all of those in the history of the language, in the English Teaching Department. In spite of this heavy load, he graciously agreed to close out his 31 year connection with the Graduate School of Education

by serving as its chairperson for his last two years before retirement.

With Kobayashi-sensei's retirement, the Graduate School, the Language Division, and the English Language Program lose more than a dedicated teacher, we lose a link with the early days of ICU and the voice of a colleague who has experienced the ups and downs of the university's first forty plus years. I personally will very much miss his advice and guidance. It is a sobering thought to realize that, with only 15 years at ICU, from April 1996, I will become the longest serving member of the English Teaching Department. I, and the other members of the department, must work hard to fill the great void that Kobayashi-sensei's retirement creates.