

Memory of Dr. Tetsu Sekine

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Spring yet far away,
on a day when snow still lay on the ground,
you left this world forever.
How I miss those ardent discussions we had, now so long ago.

From memorial Japanese short poem (Waka), by Prof. Heizo Tokutaka of the Tottori University

I received a telephone call from the hospital at my laboratory in the evening of 31st January 2002. My wife said that Dr. Sekine was in a very serious condition. I left JEOL immediately, and arrived at the hospital two hours later, where I saw Tetsu lying in bed for his final hours of his life. 5 hours later at 10:00p.m., my wife received a telephone call from the hospital at Sekine's home, and Mrs. Sekine informed us that he had passed away.

As you know, Dr. Tetsu Sekine was a very gentle and kind person with the bright eyes of those boys who are fascinated by science. He tackled everything with such enthusiasm. His first name, Tetsu, means philosophy in Japanese. He was born on the 23rd of May, 1950 at Gunma prefecture, 100km north west of Tokyo. His father was a mechanical engineer who was involved in building fighter aeroplanes during World War II.

I heard many stories about Tetsu from his sister Mrs. Inoue. He devoted himself to C.Q. ham-radio during his junior high school period. At that time he told his sister that he was going to be an electronic engineer and wanted to go to a high school specializing in technology. But his father did not agree with him and recommended Tetsu to study at university after first attending a regular high school; Tetsu followed his father's advice. He passed the entrance examinations of two science universities in Tokyo and one in Gunma near his home. As his father tempted him with the present of a new car, he followed his father's recommendation of Gunma University. He seems not to have had a period of rebellion. At the university he was active in the car club and E.S.S. (English drama club).

He entered JEOL Ltd. after having graduated from the Master's course in chemical engineering at Gunma University in April 1973. He then joined the development team of Auger electron equipment in 1974 after one year of training on the production line. His first job was the final equipment test of the JAMP (Auger electron micro probe system). He so often told us the story of his first business trip abroad to Blackpool in the UK. He was so happy to have installed the JAMP at UKAEA. A little girl who he met at a B&B taught him English and he often played with her; in fact, he continued to exchange letters with her until quite recently. Tetsu received his PhD in Engineering from Osaka University under the direction of Prof. R. Shimizu.

Our friendship started when I asked him to join our oil-painting group at Kokubunji Public Hall in Tokyo. We enjoyed oil painting sessions every Wednesday night and went on sketching trips and skiing together. One of the happiest times in his life was the trip to Scotland together with us during our summer holiday 8 years ago.

After he moved to SED (semiconductor equipment division), he took charge of the ion beam development from 1995. He was not so strong physically and his work was so busy and hard. He came home from work later, sometimes at midnight, and I was worried about his health. I heard about his stomach cancer from my wife in August 2001.

He entered a hospital. Unfortunately, his cancer had gone too far to be operated on. In the hospital, Tetsu read many books about cancer, and enthusiastically said that

he would write a book about his cancer when he got better. He came home at the end of December and stayed at home for a while, but at the beginning of the next year, 2002, he was very anemic and had water in his belly, so he returned to hospital. He continued to take a small walk every day to take care of his legs and walked to the toilet by himself until his final day. We were worrying about the severe pain usually caused at the last stage of the cancer, but fortunately, he felt no pain at all and until his death made no complaint at all. He died like fall asleep silently. His wife Reiko said that he died just as he had told her he wanted to: to be in good health and then suddenly to slip away.

Dr. Tetsu Sekine died at the age of fifty three. The non-sectarian flower funeral, as requested by Mrs. Sekine, was held on the 1st and 2nd of February, 2002. His posthumous name is "Clear true bright philosophic one with benevolent eyes"

I say good morning to Tetsu in the photograph of him on my desk every morning, and think about the great loss of my friend everyday. Dr. Tetsu Sekine has disappeared from this world, but I believe that Tetsu will live in our hearts forever.



Dr. Tetsu Sekine at the rose garden in Scotland.