Hiroshi Takaoka, the first Executive Vice President of Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute (1990-2006) passed away in Kobe, Japan on Monday, October 15, 2012. He had been in ill health for some time.

He was born in Akita Prefecture in NW Japan on November 29, 1933 and grew up there with two sisters and three brothers. When he started his college studies, he went to the next prefecture to attend Niigata National University to major in psychology, but then he realized that he was more interested in English. Because of his high grades, he was given a scholarship. In 1958, he graduated from NNU with a B.A. in English and American Literature and began teaching at Seiryo Senior High School in Niigata City. He completed the post-graduate program at NNU in 1959.

In 1963, he became an East-West Scholar at the University of Hawaii and graduated in 1965 with an MA in the Teaching of English as a Second Language. His program included studies at Indiana University and Teachers College at Columbia University. While at the East-West Center at UH, he met a charming Japanese woman named Michiko Namura, and after some courting they decided to marry.

That year, 1965, he began teaching at Sanjo High School in Niigata. In 1969, he was appointed Assistant Professor of English at Mukogawa Women’s University and became Associate Professor in 1973. He was a member of the Student Life and Academic Affairs committees. In 1977, he was appointed Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. He became Professor of English in 1981 and joined the committee of the Graduate School of Letters in 1983.

Then, in 1983-84, he was an Associate Research Fellow at Williams College in Massachusetts.

In 1986, he became Associate Chair of the English Department and began working on a plan for a study-abroad program for the department. In 1989, he was appointed to the committee for the International Exchange Office of MWU. While accompanying the Chancellor of MWU to the States to look at possible sites for a study-abroad campus, they visited Spokane to check on a small exchange program that MWU had started with the Holy Names Center at Fort Wright. The Chancellor fell in love with the campus, and, after conversations with local political, business and education leaders, an offer was made to buy the campus. It was accepted.

So, in 1990, Prof. Takaoka was appointed Executive Vice President of Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute. During his sixteen years at MFWI, he oversaw the establishment and development of a strong and unique program of intensive English for MWU students with an excellent faculty and international accreditation. There was also remodeling and renewal of many historical campus buildings, the construction of a new library and the development of many outreach programs for students to meet Americans, to learn about American culture and to share Japanese culture, including a very successful homestay program.

He received a number of awards during his career, particularly for promoting general education and international education among Japanese students:

- 1999 – Award of Merit for Excellence in Education by the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture
- 1999 – Award of Merit for 30 Years of Excellence in Educational Service by Mukogawa Gakuin
- 2000 – Award for Excellence in Educational Service in Junior College by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology

(Continued on page 2)
体育の日
Taiiku no Hi
By Masahiro Ando

It is sometimes said that October is a month for exercise. This is because, I think, there is a national holiday in October called “Physical Fitness Day.” This holiday had been October 10th from 1966 to 1999, because the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964 was held on this date. But since 2000 it has been the second Monday of October, to give people a three-day weekend, which was October 8th this year. Therefore, quite often, sports meetings can be seen here and there this month.

When you just say, “sports meetings,” people would think you are talking about them at elementary schools, junior high schools or high schools. At elementary schools, meetings are usually held on weekends because the students’ families can also come and see them. These events start at around 9am and last until about 3pm with one hour lunch break in which children can have lunch with their family talking about how they did in the morning and what their family can expect in the afternoon. A typical program includes sprint races, relay races, three-legged races, team work gymnastics, ball games, a mock cavalry battle, dancing and so on, and every student participates in some of these. Toward this event the students practice the march-in, dance and cheerleading over and over again. It is true that these events have a show aspect.

At high schools, the events have a more competitive atmosphere. The program has more racing and competing and less performance-like dancing. The heroes and heroines in this event can enjoy the rest of the school year just like a superstar at a homecoming football game.

The events at junior high schools are intermediate between elementary school and high school events, so-so entertaining as well as somewhat competitive.

Another kind of sports meeting is held by community people, in which Dads and Moms are more serious. Usually small business in the area sponsor the event, so the winners of each race can get something tiny but very useful in your daily life like scrub brushes, laundry soap, pens, funny shaped cucumbers, water in a scratched bottle and so on. Children are very excited to see their parents racing in a serious manner.

When I participated in a sports meeting in Tokyo, they had a unique race. This race requires three people, a dad, a mom and a child. One team has to make three round trips between the start line and the team’s flag about 100 feet away; in the first trip the mom carries the child on her back, in the second the dad carries the mom on his back and then the dad and the mom grab the child’s hands and feet and dash in the last trip. This race had a one-child category, two-children category and three. I still remember the children’s smiles in the race.

October is full of memories of family and friends in exercise wear, laughing happily and taking big bites of big onigiri (rice ball).