

Reflections on Yukihiro Nosé (1932–2011)

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It was with great sadness that I heard about the passing of Dr. Yukihiro Nosé. Recalling his life, it was always directed toward new and exciting prospects for treating organ system failure. He was always enthusiastic and forward thinking. Whether through teaching the many collaborators that he had, his writings, his presentations at conferences, his organization of scientific conferences, his preservation of historical artifacts, or his founding of societies and journals, his life was focused on the promotion of artificial organ technologies. I recall that when meeting some earlier researchers, they referred to him as “Mr. Artificial Organs,” a title befitting him.

I first met Yuki in the New Year of 1969 when I was a graduate student in Cleveland. By some surprising connection, I was introduced to him, and he offered me a job

(that I was not sure I wanted) in his small but growing Department of Artificial Organs at the Cleveland Clinic. I accepted the position, thinking I’ll give it a try for a year or two. At the time I could not have known the impact that decision would have on my life. I worked directly with him for over 20 years. Yuki was first a teacher. I recall his work at that time as he wrote and illustrated his manuals on the artificial kidney and the oxygenator, and convened daily morning conferences. His manuals were easy to read and demonstrated his straightforward approach to his work. His constant challenging forced others to research their positions and read the literature (at that time without the benefit of the Internet and on-line journals). There were few if any excuses that he would acknowledge. I recall one time he noted “that too much research funding is not good, it only holds you back.” While funding is important, its focus can take away the innovation that is much needed in developing this field and at times can cloud the direction. He also believed that contributions can come from many people, not only those with MDs and PhDs. Being in an institution that highly valued medical degrees, he fought hard for recognition of those who had knowledge and experience, and reached out beyond the walls of the institution to enrich his team. He built multi-disciplinary groups focused on organ system development and recognized everyone’s contributions. He saw the utility of bringing people together from other regions around the world as well as from different scientific disciplines. This mix created an environment of learning and development, spanning many organ systems.

The Department of Artificial Organs at the Cleveland Clinic was the premier group of its kind in the world and stimulated a competitive environment worldwide. His numerous publications as well as the long list of former colleagues are but one reflection of the breadth and scope

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of his influence. Many others followed his lead and tried to imitate him. I know he found a sense of pride in this. When organizing the Second Congress of the International Society for Artificial Organs in New York City, he helped organize the social program that included a trip to the play “They Are Playing Our Song” for the attendees. The music from this was also included in his musical production for the 6th Anniversary and Kick Off Ceremony for the International Center for Medical Technologies Museum Grand Re-Opening and ISRBP Presidential Reception in honor of Dr. Michael DeBakey.

I think he felt most productive in creating new things, whether they were new approaches/concepts for treating organ disease or for organizations for this purpose. He was a fighter and not much could stand in his way when fulfilling a goal. I recall the start of the journal *Artificial Organs* as an example. He felt strongly about the need to provide a forum to all artificial organ researchers in the world that was not bound by national borders, which led to the birth of the International Society for Artificial Organs (ISAO; now the International Federation for Artificial

Organs). Of course he needed to establish a journal to be the official voice of this Society, and *Artificial Organs* was born. Some would say “how do you finance and operate such an endeavor,” but to him these were minor details. The “minor details,” such as the journal logo, initial funding, advertising and article solicitations, proofreading, typesetting, production, and shipping, were worked out in a very short period of time. In August 1977 the first issue was created and delivered to the attendees of the Second International Symposium for Artificial Internal Organs in Tokyo, Japan, which became the first congress of the ISAO.

Dr. Nosé lived by his credo of “Unlimited Curiosity, Unlimited Enthusiasm, Unlimited Optimism, and Unlimited Friendship.” His impact was great and far reaching. My best wishes to his family are that they remember him in this light. We are thankful to you for sharing him with us. We are certainly better persons for having known him.

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