OBITUARY

In memory of Professor Hiroshi Tamura

Takao Kurokawa

Professor Hiroshi Tamura, who was honorary member of the Human Interface Society (Japan), passed away on the 28th of August 2010, at the age of 75. He was a visionary pioneer in the field of Human Interface in Japan and internationally. He was member of the Advisory Board of the Universal Access in the Information Society Journal.

Professor Tamura was born in Niigata Prefecture on the 14th of April 1935. In 1958, he graduated in Electrical Engineering from Kyoto University. From the same university, he obtained his Master Degree in Engineering in 1960 and his PhD in Engineering in 1963.

His academic and research career started in 1964 at the Faculty of Engineering of Kyoto University, but very soon he moved to the Faculty of Engineering Science of Osaka University, where he was appointed Assistant Professor in 1966. In 1988, he was appointed Professor at the Faculty of Engineering and Design of the Kyoto Institute of

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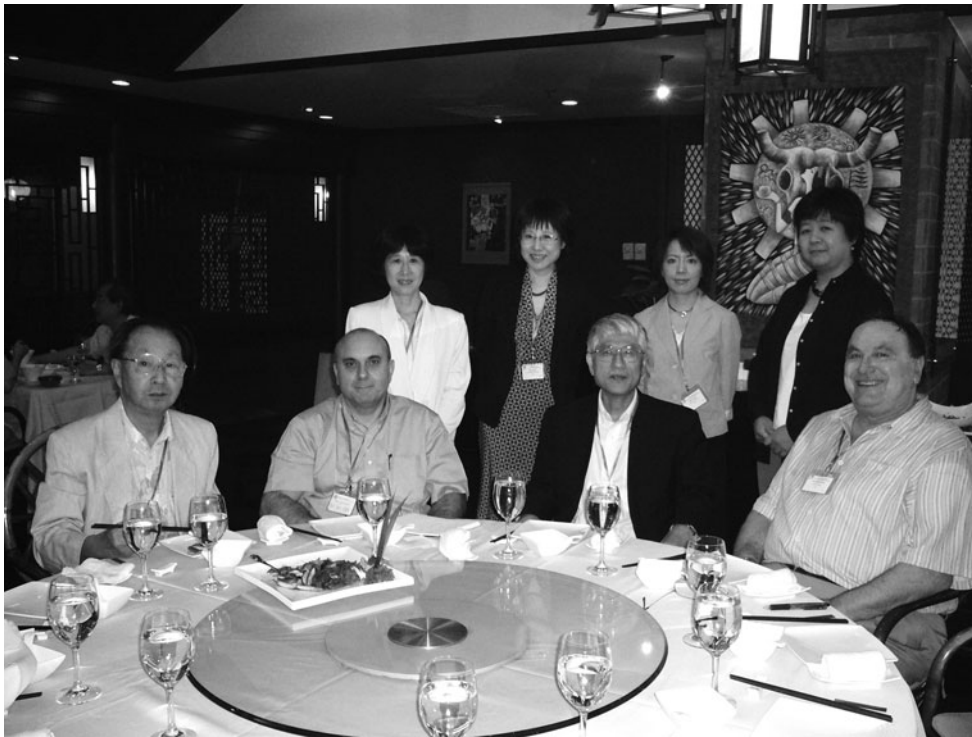e-mail: kurokawa@sys.es.osaka-u.ac.jp

Technology, from where he retired as Honorary Professor in 1999. From 2001 to 2005, he was also Research Professor at the Faculty of Human Environment of the Hiroshima International University.

Professor Tamura's research interests were very wide. His PhD research was in the area of nonlinear oscillations. After moving to Osaka University, he extended his interests to oscillating and rhythmic phenomena in neurons and nerve systems, as well as nonlinear control by humans and animals. At the same time, he undertook research on man–machine systems and adaptive/learning control. These activities led to fundamental progress in the field, as he established the innovative result that humans' nonlinear action behavior can be exploited for the control of complex systems, thus outperforming previous approaches based on humans as linear controllers.

Subsequently, he conducted research in a wide variety of areas in the domain of bioengineering, including the nervous systems, animals' learning, and exploratory eye movement.

In the early 1980s, foreseeing the importance of Human Machine Interfaces in the years to come, he conceived the vision of establishing the field of Human Interface in Japan and internationally, and started a series of related activities.

In 1983 and 1984, he organized two symposiums sponsored by the Kansai Chapter of the Society of Instrument and Control Engineers (SICE), entitled "Future Man–Machine Interface" and "Man–Machine Interface in Instrumentation and Control", respectively. Additionally, in 1984, he established the SICE "Technical Committee of Human Interface". The first Human Interface Symposium took place in 1985, and this symposium has been held annually since then.

Although the term "Human Interface" was already in use in the United States of America at the time, Professor

Fig. 1 Prof. Tamura (*first left*) during a pleasant meeting with Prof. Salvendy (*first right*) and others at HCI International 2007 in Beijing

Tamura's view of the Human Interface was fundamentally wider and deeper, as he viewed the Human Interface as deeply interrelated with human physiology, psychology, life, and culture. In this respect, the concept of Human Interface, shared by many of his colleagues and widely adopted in Japan as a result of Professor Tamura pioneering activities, has a more flexible and broader meaning compared with Human–Computer Interaction (HCI) and Computer–Human Interaction (CHI).

At an international level, Professor Tamura promoted the Human Interface in many international scientific venues. In particular, since 1993, the Human Interface Symposium is held jointly with the Human Computer Interaction International Conference (HCII) founded by Professor Gavriel Salvendy (Fig. 1). Professor Tamura also established international exchanges and cooperation with the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.

The SICE Technical Committee of Human Interface was succeeded in 1999 by the Human Interface Society (HIS). Professor Tamura was nominated the first honorary member of the Society, in recognition of his visionary role and his efforts spanning over two decades toward the creation of the Society and the establishment of the Human Interface field.

In 1998, he also launched the Research Group on Mobile Ergonomics of the Japan Ergonomics Society, focusing on the interfaces of car-navigation systems and mobile phones. Since then, the "Symposium on Mobile Interaction and Navigation" has been held annually. In 1999, he established the "Tamura Institute for Human Interface", where he continued his research activities. Moreover, he endeavored to establish a Society of Mobile Interactions to take over the achievements by the Research Group on Mobile Ergonomics. Unfortunately, however, the Symposium "Mobile '10" held in Nagoya in March 2010 was his last participation in a conference.

Professor Tamura was also an inspiring academic, and many of his former students are now researchers and engineers widely recognized at a national and international level.

He was a man of few words. His mottos were "Finding problems is more important than solving them" and "Academic communities must enhance their members to conduct research and offer them the opportunity to present and discuss their ideas." He practiced the first motto in his own work, as testified from his seminal papers and keynote speeches at numerous national and international conferences. The second motto was fully realized in his pioneering activities toward establishing research groups and symposiums, as well as channels of international collaboration.

He also had a strong interest in the field of philosophy of science and in the labor movement.