The late Professor Yasuo Miyake
(1908—1990)
OBITUARY

Professor Yasuo Miyake

The Oceanographical Society of Japan has to report sadly the death of Professor Yasuo Miyake who was a past President of the Society. He passed away on 16 October 1990 at an age of eighty-two.

Professor Miyake was born in Okayama City in 1908, a son of Dr. Ishiro Miyake, Professor of Psychology at the Sixth National College. After graduation from Tokyo Imperial University in 1931 in chemistry, he began his professional career at the Hokkaido University as a research assistant (1931–1935). He moved to the Central Meteorological Observatory as a chief chemist (1935–1946), and became a pioneer of marine chemistry in Japan. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science from the Tokyo Imperial University with a dissertation entitled “Marine chemistry of the western North Pacific” in 1940. He served as Director of the Geochemical Laboratory at the Meteorological Research Institute (MRI) during 1946–1969.

In 1956, he was invited to be a visiting professor at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California and also at California Institute of Technology. In 1957 he was appointed as Professor of Inorganic Chemistry at Tokyo Kyoiku University, with a joint appointment at the Geochemical Laboratory of the MRI. Since then he brought up many excellent students until his retirement from the academic positions in 1972.

He was one of the original members of the Oceanographical Society of Japan, became the fifth President of the Society (1974–1978), and has been an Honorary Member of the Society since 1979. He was awarded the Oceanographical Society of Japan Prize in 1967, for his “Oceanographic studies by means of natural and artificial radioactive isotopes and stable isotopes”.

Besides his activities related to our Society, his contribution in many aspects of national and international scientific administration was notable. For example, he was President of the Geochemical Society of Japan (1963–1971). He served as the Chief Editor of the “Journal of Radiation Research” (1962–1971) published by the Japan Radiation Research Society. He was elected as a member of the Science Council of Japan (1966–1978). He served a member of SCOR (1959–1978), and also was a committee member of IUGG, CACR, IAPSO and IAMAP. He was Chairman of the Standing Committee of Marine Science (1966–1971) of the Pacific Science Association. After his retirement from academic positions in 1972, his enthusiasm for science lead him to found the Geochemistry Research Association (GRA), and created the “Miyake Prize” in the field of Geochemistry. Eighteen scientists have been recipients of the Prize to this date.

Immediately after the Bikini incident in 1954, Professor Miyake was seriously involved in studies of artificial radioactivities released from nuclear bomb tests in the atmospheric and marine environment.

His scientific works of over two hundred were published and his life-time works were compiled in three volumes of “Geochemical Studies of the Ocean and the Atmosphere” in 1978, 1979 and 1990. He wrote a well-known textbook “Elements of Geochemistry” in Japanese in 1954, and its revised English edition was published in 1965. Its Russian edition was also published in 1969. He wrote several other Japanese textbooks.
Besides the Oceanographical Society of Japan Prize, Professor Miyake was awarded prizes from the Meteorological Society of Japan (1974) and the Japan Society of Sea Water Sciences (1977). His outstanding scientific performance may also be recognized by the fact that two volumes of “The Natural Radiation Environment II” were dedicated to Professors Y. Miyake and K.Z. Morgan of the USA, for their innovative works in natural and artificial radioactivities (USERDA Publication, 1972). In 1980, “Isotope Marine Chemistry” edited by Professor Goldberg and others was published to celebrate his seventieth anniversary.

Since his involvement in the Bikini incident, he dedicated his life to movements for the prevention of the birth of a military-industrial-academic complex, and against future wars, including nuclear wars. Among his contributions to the world peace, the establishment of “The Peace Society of the Lucky Dragon” (the Japanese fishing boat exposed to the radioactive fallout of the bomb tests at the Bikini atoll) is worthy to mention.

In 1971 Professor Miyake suffered from sinus cancer, and later, from a liver cancer. He achieved all of his post-retirement activities while he was overcoming his illness. Many of his Japanese essays describing his triumph over cancer, joyfulness to engage in science, and desire for the world peace, struck our heart. His last scientific paper is still in press.

The passing away of Professor Yasuo Miyake is very much regretted by all who know him. The Society would like to pass on our sincerest condolences to his wife and family.

Yoshiaki Toba
Acting President of the Oceanographical Society of Japan