



**SHIGERU OAE**  
**(1920 - 2000)**

It is with great sorrow that I announce here the news that Dr. Shigeru Oae, Professor Emeritus of Tsukuba University, passed away on the 3rd of May, 2000 at the age of 80. I would like to contribute this memorial address as an offering to the spirit of the deceased.

Dr. Oae had suffered from diabetes for many years and while he was being treated for this disease, he was diagnosed with pneumonia. At that point, he was hospitalized for about one year and was unable to return to his own home except for one short time.

Dr. Oae published about 500 research papers and about 120 reviews and monographs together with 15 books. For many years he was the world's top leader in the field of heteroatom chemistry.

In 1946, shortly after the end of World War II, Dr. Oae began his career as a chemistry researcher by joining a group at Osaka University. You can imagine the terrible social situation of Japan in that era. People were desperate for food to survive and had no time to pay attention to cultural development such as the sciences. It is therefore understandable that he left Japan for Kansas, USA. In order to become involved in the realm of modern chemistry. Although he returned to Japan three years later, he remained dissatisfied with the state of chemistry here, and traveled back to the USA, this time to Pennsylvania in 1954. It was 1959 when he returned to Japan as Head of the Department of Chemistry at the Radiation Center of Osaka Prefecture, where we first met and worked together investigating the chemistry of sulfur. This position provided him with his first opportunity to organize and direct his own chemistry research group and gave him a good chance to develop his ability in chemistry. There is no doubt the members of this group, including myself, were extremely pleased to be involved in his American-style and modern chemistry which he constantly introduced us to. The experimental results we obtained were published internationally and were appreciated by innumerable chemists around the world. All members of our group could sense his enthusiasm for chemistry, which soon became a characteristic of the group. His major chemistry topics in this period of his career were 3rd resonance in organic sulfur compounds and chemistry of pyridine *N*-oxide. He used to advise us not to follow others but to use one's own ideas – to go our own. Since then, these words have been my motto.

In 1963, Dr. Oae was appointed as a professor of chemistry at Osaka City University, where his research group was expanded significantly to include about 30 research members including graduate and undergraduate students. It should be noted that graduate and undergraduate students have been contributors to most research initiatives in Japanese universities. The major topic he investigated was the "chemistry of sulfoxide," including stereochemical investigations of various sulfoxide reactions. I believe that his research in this field is the most brilliant and memorable among his many outstanding contributions to chemistry. His talent in chemistry blossomed rapidly at Osaka City University and his laboratory soon became the mecca of chemistry. I remember clearly that not only Japanese chemists but also chemists from all over the world used to visit him at his office in the university, which continued after his move to Tsukuba University in 1973. Student rioting occurred in universities around the world for several years around 1970. Dr. Oae was faced with these difficulties and was forced to quit his research at Osaka City University for a couple of years. Fortunately, a new university was founded at Tsukuba and he was invited to the university as Head of the Chemistry Department, which provided another opportunity for him to teach his chemistry to an entirely new group of people. He devoted himself constantly to his chemistry and published many papers on the chemistry of sulfoxide.

A couple of years before he retired from the university, he became involved in a new research interest, ligand coupling. Although this phenomenon is the same as that which we see in reductive elimination, a conventional concept in transition-metal chemistry, he introduced stereochemistry into the reaction in order to elucidate the details of the mechanism. His research into the chemistry of ligand coupling continued until he passed away. Indeed, this charismatic scholar loved chemistry throughout his entire life.

Dr. Shigeru Oae was the kind of man who had a great love for humanity. He was always happy surrounded by people. I believe that this is the major reason why he loved traveling around the world, making as many friends as possible. At the same time, his interest was not limited to chemistry and humanity but also extended to various arts such as singing songs, painting pictures, and making pottery.

Therefore, in memory of Dr. Oae, I would like to ask you all to come together, to communicate with each other, and to enjoy a good conversation. The topic of conversation may be anything at all. Whatever the conversation and wherever it takes place, I am sure that Dr. Oae would be happy to join you and listen regardless or whether you can hear him or not. Perhaps he is now delivering lectures in chemistry in front of angels in Heaven. I can imagine his voice, saying "ligand coupling is a phenomenon which..."

With deepest sympathy to my mentor, the late Dr. Shigeru Oae

**Atsuyoshi Ohno**  
**Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University**  
**Professor, Fukui University of Technology**

We knew Professor Shigeru Oae for many years. We here in Riga remember our friendly meetings in Tsukuba, Riga, London, and other places of the world. They made us better, stronger, and wiser.

Professor S. Oae's books on organosulfur chemistry and journals on heteroatom chemistry will always remind us of his magnificent contribution to these fields of chemistry.

Born by the beauty of Japan, he became a lantern for the whole chemical world.

It is with deep grief that we learned of the death of Professor Shigeru Oae.

The Editorial Board expresses its most sincere condolence and wholehearted sympathy to his relatives and co-workers.

**Professor Edmunds Lukevics**  
**Editor-in Chief**