

Pre-celebration of Koji Nakanishi's 75th Birthday

Mamoru Ohashi,

Department of Materials Science, Kanagawa University

It is a great honor and a privilege for me, as one of his former students, to write a preface for this special issue in honor of Professor Koji Nakanishi on his 75th birthday.

Dr. Koji Nakanishi, Centennial Professor of Columbia University, is one of the most widely recognized and honored contributors to the fields of organic chemistry, natural products chemistry, and bioorganic chemistry: He was born in 1925 in Hong Kong and received his B.S. and Ph. D. from Nagoya University. He was a post-graduate at Harvard University as recipient of a GARIOA fellowship studying under the supervision of Prof. Louis F. Fieser. He then became assistant professor at Nagoya Univ., followed by professorships at Tokyo Kyoiku Univ., Tohoku Univ. and Columbia Univ. He has been Centennial Professor of Chemistry at Columbia University since 1980. He served as Director of Research at the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology in Kenya and Director at Suntory Institute for Bioorganic Research. The major awards and honours he has received are: Asahi Cultural Prize(1968), E. Guenther Award(ACS, 1978), Chemical Society of Japan Award(1979), Imperial Prize of the Japan Academy(1990), A.C.Cope Award(ACS, 1990), National Academy of Sciences Award(1994), Robert A. Welch Award in Chemistry(1996). His research covers isolation, structural and bioorganic studies of bioactive compounds, retinal proteins, interaction between ligand and neuroreceptors, structural studies of oligosaccharides, and application of various spectroscopic methods, especially circular dichroic spectroscopy.

Here, I want to give a brief sketch of the Nakanishi Symposium and Nakanishi Prize recently established as a cooperative work of the American Chemical Society(ACS) and the Chemical Society of Japan(CSJ). It was a few years ago, in May of 1994 in order to commemorate and to honor Koji Nakanishi for his unparalleled contributions to the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry, that his colleagues in the States at Columbia University, professors Thomas Katz, Ronald Breslow and Gilbert Stork and also seven distinguished scientists in Japan, Osamu Hayaishi, Yoshimasa Hirata, Katsura Morita, the late Tetsuo Nozoe, Kenkichi Nukada, Keizo Saji, and Takashi Sugimura established fund raising committees and started to collect contributions for creating an endowed

symposium to be called "The Nakanishi Symposium on Bioorganic and Organic Chemistry". Since then more than 200,000 dollars have been contributed.

In May of 1995 the American fund raising committee proposed to the Chemical Society of Japan and the American Chemical Society that the symposium be held under the joint work of the chemical societies of both countries. The American Chemical Society accepted this proposal and established "The Nakanishi Prize" as one of the American Chemical Society Awards. In Japan, at first, the organizing committee of the Nakanishi Symposium had intended to hold the symposium, but considering the proposal of the American fundraising committee and the action of the American Chemical Society, the organizing committee proposed to the Chemical Society of Japan to hold the Nakanishi Symposium under the auspices of the CSJ and to award the Nakanishi Prize with a medal inscribed with the names of both societies. In September 1996 the Chemical Society of Japan accepted this proposal and agreed to have the symposium as a cooperative event with the ACS. The Nakanishi prize is awarded in the United States in odd-numbered years and in Japan in even-numbered years.

Professor Frank H. Westheimer of Harvard University was awarded the first Nakanishi Prize in the United States in 1997, while the first Nakanishi Symposium in Japan was held quite successfully in December of 1996 in Tokyo, where the first Nakanishi Prize in Japan was awarded to Professor Yoshimasa Hirata of Nagoya University.

The memorandum of agreement between the ACS and the CSJ states that "the Nakanishi Prize will be awarded to recognize and stimulate significant work that extends chemical and spectroscopic methods to the study of important biological phenomena. The prize will be awarded to an individual without regard to age or nationality for outstanding scientific achievement. Special consideration will be given for work that has contributed broadly on an international scope." This statement briefly and nicely represents all the characteristics of Professor Nakanishi and his scientific contributions. We are very happy to be able to start the Nakanishi Symposium and sincerely hope this Symposium will continue for a long time to come and be even more successful in the future. We believe that a new paradigm for natural products chemistry and bioorganic chemistry is going to be created, and Professor Nakanishi and the Nakanishi Symposium will contribute enormously to establishing this new world.