

Farewell: A Memoir of Prof. Paul Robertson

— There is no substitute for hard work —

Kiyoshi Fukasawa

Some day and some time, we need to bid farewell to someone in our life, however, bidding farewell to my best friend will be the most painful moment as I will be missing him from my workplace. Although not blood-related, Prof. Robertson is a special person in my life. He is not only a colleague but also a great mentor to me. Enduring overwhelming sense of loss, all I can do is just continue along this way. I can console myself by following in the footsteps of his works and make it worth remembering by bidding him some encouraging farewell messages.

Prof. Robertson was born in Wellington, New Zealand, on May 25th, 1948. His father was an immigrant from Shetland, known in Japan for its *Shetland Pony* and *Shetland Sheepdog*. Having a different upbringing with his parents, Prof. Robertson can speak the Shetland dialect and knows much about the history and legends of the Gaelic world. He speaks Te Reo Māori as well. However, I'm sure Prof. Robertson knows more about Japanese culture than some Japanese people do.

He is a graduate of Wellington Teachers College and Victoria University of Wellington. He taught in primary schools in the Wellington region for 15 years, from 1971 to 1986. During that time, he was Deputy Principal at 3 schools, and Acting Principal at 2 of them. He was also seconded by the Department of Education to work on two projects – the Schools Without Failure Project and the national Health Syllabus.

In 1986 he joined the teaching staff at Wellington College of Education (formerly, Wellington Teachers College). During his 8 years there he held the position of H.O.D. Professional Studies, and before being invited as Guest Professor at Edogawa University in Japan (1994), was Associate Director of Primary Education. He was given an honorary chiefly title in Samoa by the head chief of Solosolo, in recognition of his work in New Zealand with Samoan teacher training and teaching Samoan children.

He assumed the post of professor in Meisei University (Ome Campus) in 2002 and served as the head of the International Studies Centre at Ome Campus from 2004 to 2009. Around that time Jiritsu-to-Taiken programme (自立と体験) was discussed at General Education and some unique subjects were formulated in the general education curriculum. Prof. Robertson took up the subject of Ibunka-Taiken (異文化体験科目) and he then developed the study abroad programme with Massey University which started

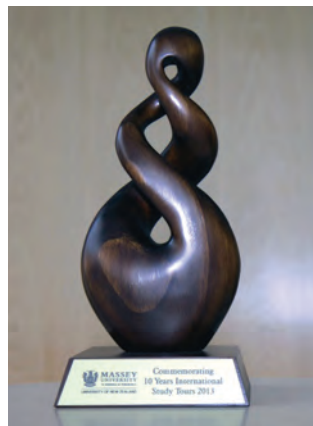
in 2004.

His service to Meisei's four-week programme was formally recognized. Prof. Robertson received a prestigious award from Massey University in March, 2013 for his decade of running an international study tour for students. This programme was designed by Prof. Robertson to improve English language skills in a native speaking environment and develop a greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures. It emphasizes learning through participation and experience. At the ceremony, he was presented a "pikorua", a double twist wooden carved sculpture (in the picture opposite), which symbolizes the strength and beauty of enduring friendship and interwoven lives. Everyone will admit the notion that Prof. Robertson has become a bridge between two countries.

Prof. Robertson also received a letter of appreciation from the president of Aoyama Gakuin University in 2014 for his activities in their educational curriculum. Based on the previous class evaluation by students, he was highly evaluated as an excellent teacher. As a part-time lecturer, Prof. Robertson taught English at Aoyama Gakuin University from 2008 to 2016, a period of 8 years. During this time, he taught the class of "Current Events" which helped students gain skills in navigating the complex terrain of intercultural communication for their future lives.

As these examples show, Prof. Robertson is an icon of integrity and hard work, as well as a great mentor to all of us. As an effective mentor, he isn't just about leading or encouraging, but coaching. His mentorship helped us through some of the most difficult times. He has shown us new depths of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. He was always there with a kind word, a verse, or a quote that helped us get through some of our darkest times. He is truly a blessing and a light in our days. This equally applies to our students as well.

As the proverb 「桃李もの言わざれども下自ずから蹊を成す (A man of virtue will naturally attract admirers; good wine speaks for itself)」 says, Room 27-609 is a fascinating place for students. Prof. Robertson is always there for them. His down to earth character makes him open himself to listening to the points of view of the students. Students get together, talk, give advice and help each other like a family. This creates mutual respect



Commemorating 10 Years of International Study Tours, 2013, presented by Massey University, New Zealand



An award from Aoyama Gakuin University

and strengthens bonds among students. This also forms a deep emotional connection and gives students a powerful sense of security.

His diverse experiences and achievements indicated above remind me of Thomas A. Edison's quote, "There is no substitute for hard work." Prof. Robertson doesn't give up easily. He comes to school around five in the morning to make everything in good condition. Serving a cup of coffee to me has become one of his daily routines. I cannot thank him enough.

I only hope that we'll be able to support and encourage others as he has supported and encouraged us. I will always remember the good times we spent together. Those precious moments were the best times of my life. Farewell my friend; hope to see you soon.



A photo taken by a student in his office, Room 27-609