

A Fond Farewell

Tomás O'Connor

First of all let me write about how I came to become acquainted with Professor Kenji Ueda. It must have been in the year 2005 when I first encountered the distinguished professor in the student office of Beppu University. He addressed me by my family name in quite a respectable tone as follows; "You must be Mr. O' Connor, I have heard about you." Naturally I was taken aback by being suddenly addressed by a complete stranger, but what astonished me the more was without doubt his exceptional command of the English language. While I hadn't any direct dealings with the Professor immediately following our first meeting, when I did run into him he would without fail address me cordially and seemed keen on both getting to know me as a person and on becoming more familiar with the culture and literature of my country, the Republic of Ireland. Indeed I was amazed and honoured by Professor Ueda's deep knowledge of Irish literature, culture and history. I was at first relieved by this as it is an unfortunate but true fact that many people are not familiar with my country. We have had many fascinating conversations about subjects as varied as life as a foreigner residing in Japan, previous troubles and clashes, both political and cultural which occurred on the island of Ireland, and important events in Ireland, for example St. Patrick's Day. Whether the topic of conversation was cultural, historical or regarding English education, I always found the Professors opinions a welcome breath of fresh air.

Inevitably our meetings became relatively more regular following my appointment as a lecturer in the same department as Professor Ueda in April 2011. Upon appointment I was warmly welcomed in person and he would often offer his advice on what material or topics I should use for lectures or trial classes for senior high school students.

In a sense it is a pity that my time working with him was limited to merely one year. However I know that he will never be forgotten by not just myself, but by his many coworkers and the thousands of students he has taught over the more than three decades throughout which he devoted his life for Beppu University. I trust that he will retain his involvement with the education field and wish a fulfilling life post-retirement. I would be especially appreciative if he were to maintain his interest in all things Irish and contribute to Japanese people gaining a greater knowledge of my country, its people and its culture.