

## KENNETH D. BUTLER, 1930–2009

### In Memoriam

A number of IUC graduates wrote to us after learning that the Center's longtime Director Ken Butler had passed away on October 5, 2009. We include some of those messages in this special issue, along with an abbreviated account of Dr. Butler's career. A tribute by Professor Steven Carter of Stanford University (then the Executive Director of the IUC) appeared in the 2009 issue of this Newsletter.

**Gerry Curtis** (Class of 1964–65)

I don't recall exactly when I first met Ken Butler, but it probably was at a Center party shortly after he became Director. I had graduated a few years earlier and I remember how delighted I was that someone so committed to language training and prepared to stay on as Director for more than a couple of years had taken charge. Ken invited me to visit him in his mountain retreat in Gumma sometime in the early seventies. The area was so beautiful and the village so full of interesting people that I ended up building a small house right near Ken's and for many years made that my base when living in Japan. I'd see Ken often when I was up there until he sold the house and moved to Yokohama. We would get together in the evening for some serious drinking and conversation. Invariably the conversation would come around to the Center, how to improve language teaching, what Center students who had graduated were doing, and what could be done to get the Center a secure financial base. Ken was devoted to his wife and daughter and he was also devoted to the Center. For him it was more a calling than a job. Ken left the Center in 1977 after being Director for ten years but he could not just put it behind him. Every time we met he would talk about the Center and his hopes for it. He accepted an invitation to be Director again in the mid-1990s and pretty much stayed with the Center until near the end of his life.

Ken Butler was a wonderful man, a fine linguist, and a talented administrator. The Center would not have become the preeminent institution that it is without him. I am fortunate that I was able to know him and count him as a friend.



The most important thing we can do to honor his memory is to do all in our power to make sure that the Center continues to thrive.

**Richard Wallace** (Class of 1970–71)

I always thought it was a remarkable story that a kid from Casper, Wyoming learned classical Japanese, studied the *Heike Monogatari*, made a life in Japan, and helped all manner of people in their respective personal quests to learn about Japan and put that knowledge to use. He should definitely be remembered for the man he was, the things he did and the lives he affected. I was saddened to learn of his passing.

**Ted Cook** (Class of 1971–72)

"If you do well, we at Princeton will pick up your tuition," was the way Professor Marius B. Jansen told me the terms under which I would be allowed to attend the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies in Tokyo. It was our last meeting in the spring of 1971 before I headed off to Japan, on my own initiative, to try to bring my Japanese language up to the level that my ambition to pursue the study of the country's history required. I'd been accepted to Princeton after an M.A. in Far Eastern Studies at the University of London. I had been taught by W. G. Beasley, Ian Nish, Richard Sims, and Charles Dunn, but aside from a summer of language at Harvard and a single crash semester at Princeton, I was language-less.

Arrival at the Kojimachi Kaikan in September was a revelation. Never had I been given the opportunity to work with such dedicated teachers—Ōtsubo, Takagi, the Mizu-

tanis—nor had I ever been so clearly over my head amid classmates who had specialized in Japanese for years and who far surpassed me in both formal and practical experience. All I really had was a need to succeed, plus the financial “incentive” MBI had provided.

That is when Kenneth Butler, the Director, whom I held in a kind of awe from having read his work on Japanese literature, called me into his office. No doubt he had observed himself, and also had been informed by the instructors, that I was struggling. He smiled broadly and offered me a few words of advice: “You didn’t become an idiot when you started to study Japanese. Everything you know, you still do. You just don’t yet have the words for it. Everything you want to learn, you can, but you’ll now want to have it in Japanese too. It’s really not that difficult.” Such a simple credo, yet for me, the golden key to see language as both tool and means, and not something divorced from who I am.

Dr. Butler’s willingness to step into my life with help gave me both the courage and the excitement to overcome my momentary doubts and keep on with the real work of the language. It also turned me in the direction my research would eventually take—listening, asking, seeking out lives and experiences from people who had experienced war and life in modern Japan. I would take that path with my then fiancée Haruko Taya—we were married October 29, during that first term at IUC, prompting a few comments like “that was pretty fast”—but without the few words from the man in charge, willing to engage on a most human level, I believe I might never have completed the year, returned to Princeton and my scholarship, and eventually earned that PhD. I might not have had a career in a field I have come to love. Thank you Ken.



Ken Butler teaching an IUC class in the late 1960s.

### *David Livdahl* (Class of 1973–74)

My relationship with Ken Butler consisted of two parts. The first was the year I spent in one of the “less advanced” classes of four at the IUC in the Nōken (Agriculture Research Institute) Building. Our juvenile sense of humor enjoyed it very much when an expensive hair salon just across the street from the “No Ken” building opened shop with the name “Yes George.”

The second stage of my relationship started after my Center years, first in California, where I tried to provide business advice and contacts for Ken when he visited LA in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when he was trying to develop the hardware and software for self-instruction program kits in Japanese for foreigners. Ken and I became friends after that, and we would get together in Tokyo from time to time for lunch or dinner. I also visited the Center once or twice after it moved to Yokohama.

Ken later told me that although the class I was assigned to at the Center in 1973–74 may not have set any records for test scores or developing serious mainstream scholars of Japan, he enjoyed the likes of Tracy Dahlby and me and hadn’t been upset that it appeared very unlikely that we were bound for successful careers in academia (that is probably putting it very diplomatically).

For me, Ken was the “glue” for the Center. He somehow made a wide variety of students feel at home and welcome there. His dedication to his teachers and students was admirable, and I am very proud of his friendship in the years after my time as a student at the Center.

### *Tracy Dahlby* (Class of 1973–74)

When I was 23 and studying at the Nihon Kenkyu Center in 1973–74, Ken Butler had a way of looking at me with shrewd eyes in that craggy, three-times-around-the-block face of his and I knew HE KNEW exactly what I was thinking. Instead of reprimanding me for not exactly keeping my nose to the grindstone at all times, though, he just smiled and nodded his head. And in such moments, I got the distinct impression that Ken might once have been 23 himself. Ken was a surpassing linguist, an innovative administrator, a Japan hand’s Japan hand, a Wyoming poet by way of the World of the Shining Prince—but above all Ken was a mensch. A great many of us, his former students, owe him a great deal for having the inveterate teacher’s faith that, armed with

# 特集 天皇陛下御在位五十年

●外国人から見た天皇陛下

## “象徴”を持つ幸せな日本人

天皇陛下ご訪米以来、われわれアメリカ人の天皇観は大きく変わった。人間天皇を、理解できたのと同時に、諸外国には見られぬ特殊な存在であることも認識した。



K・D・バトラー  
（哲学博士、アメリカ・カナダ十二  
大学連合日本研究センター所長）

天皇と中国古代の帝王との相違

私はこれまで、日本という国について勉強してきたが、天皇陛下もしくは天皇制については、専門的に勉強したことはない。したがって、これから私が述べることは、日本につ

いて勉強したことのある一外国人が「象徴」として語る天皇陛下なしいは天皇制というふうには理解していただきたいと思う。私が初めて日本を訪れたのは、講和前年の昭和二十六年から、すでに二十五年になろうとしている。初めの三年間、フルブライト留学生として東京大学に留学し、帰国して四年

間、エール大学で日本文学を教えたのも、再び来日して、この仕事について、今年で十年になる。

日本についての私の研究は古典文学から始まり、学位論文は『平家物語』であった。その後、この仕事についてから、日本文学を全面的に研究するようになった。当センターは上級日本語コースに来る学生が、それぞれに専攻している部門があるので、一般的な指導も行い、歴史、宗教、現代文学まで教えている。そういう関係から、天皇制については一般的な形で勉強したことはあるが、私はその専門家というわけではない。

私が初めて日本の「天皇」について知ったのは、第二次大戦中だった。当時、私はまだ子供だったが、戦争のための宣伝として、日本の天皇と、日本の軍国主義というものを結びつけて聞かされた。しかし、中学とか、高校では教えていなかった。日本の天皇がどのような地位にいるのかというふうなことはほとんど知らず、よその国の指導者であるというくらいは知識しかなかった。

象徴、を持つ幸せな日本人  
そういう状態で終戦を迎え、初めて日本に来た時、率直に言って私は非常な驚きに包まれた。日本人はわれわれがアメリカで知られていたような国民ではないということが、まず日本国内を歩き回り、たくさんの人と話し合い、交際してみてもわかった。天皇陛下が、その頃、なお日本の天皇として統一していたことも、当時の私には非常に不思議に思えた。

外国の土を初めて踏んでみて（ほかにも外国はメキシコくらいしか知らなかったから）今まで外国に対する一つの観念として頭に入っていたものが、こんなにも間違っていたのかということ、自分の目で確かめることができた。軍役を終るとシカゴ大学に入学した。ここで主として日本のことを勉強するつもりだったが、当時のシカゴ大学では日本のことをほとんど教えておらず、やむを得ず中国の古典哲学と文学を専攻した。この勉強の過程で、中国の帝についての哲学とか、思想を学び、それに続いて今度は日本の天皇と、中国の古代の帝王との違いに興味を覚え、それから日本の古典文学を勉強したときに、その歴史的な違いを学ぶことができた。中国の帝王というのは、常に新しい帝が出てくる。実際いろんな系統の違う、あるいは民族の違う帝が出てくる。実際の日本の天皇は神武天皇から始まって、何千年も血統的に続いているという点が、一番はっきりした相違点である。それが日本国民の象徴として、「象徴」というのは戦後だけじゃなくて、ずっと長い間、民族の統合の象徴として続いていたわけである。日本は広い国じゃないし、東海の島国だけだ、この日本人の文化に統一性を与えたのは、私はやっぱり天皇であらうと思う。そういう意味で、天皇あるいは天皇制が日本の国家や、日本民族のために果たした役割は非常に大きなものがある。

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“Shōchō” o motsu shiawase na Nihonjin,” essay published in *Jiyū minshu* 250 (1976).

the fundamentals of Japanese vocabulary and syntax, we would eventually find our way in the world. And for that we owe him our enduring thanks and respect.

**Aoki Soichi** (Faculty member since 1989, Associate Director since 1999)

Last fall when I heard that Dr. Butler had passed away, I could hardly believe it. It had been only a year since he retired. I was deeply saddened. As I thought back on the time since I first met him in 1995, I felt renewed appreciation and gratitude for the great many things he had taught me. And not only in the professional sphere, but also in the personal, I had enjoyed his company—he was the guest of honor at my wedding, for example.

The years 2008 and 2009, immediately after he retired, were particularly difficult for me. A search for a successor to Dr. Butler as resident director of the IUC had ended inconclusively, and I was appointed acting director. Just as I became immersed in my new responsibilities, my father became seriously ill, and at the end of 2008, he died. Then, as I was making preparations for my father's funeral,

I heard the sad news that Ōtsubo-sensei, a former IUC faculty member who had mentored me in Japanese language pedagogy, had passed away. And then last October, Dr. Butler. All this made me realize that in human life, there are times when very big changes occur suddenly and simultaneously.

When Dr. Butler arrived at the IUC to take the director's position for a second time in 1995, I had just become the program coordinator for the first time. From then on, he and I met almost daily to discuss the curriculum. In fact, although I say “discuss,” that is putting it mildly, and I remember we were fairly often just one step shy of real argument. In those days—or maybe I should say then even more than now—I was inclined to be a little pushy, and as everyone knows, the always passionate Dr. Butler could be pretty obstinate. It wasn't rare for us to go at it quite heatedly. Never, however, I realize as I reflect on it now, did bad feeling from these arguments last. As soon as we finished debating each other, our relationship became good again. The important point that I want to make here, as I recall these debates, is that our discussions were extremely

4 productive and led to improvements in the IUC instructional program.

By 2003, when Dr. Butler came back to the Center for a third stint as director, he was no longer in good health, and the IUC itself faced uncommonly severe circumstances. All this weighed heavily on him, and I think his feelings from that time on were very complicated. For him, there was nothing else in the world as important as the IUC. He had devoted his full energies to its creation and continuation. Precisely because of this, I imagine, while he very strongly desired the Center to go on, he seemed to have the sense that it was he who had made the IUC what it was, and that without his own presence in the future, the IUC could not continue.

With due, and true, respect for Dr. Butler, I wish to differ from him on the point of the second feeling that I attribute to him (that the Center could not survive without him). As a result of his efforts, there are a great many individuals and organizations that support the IUC. Thanks to him, the Center itself has grown into a fine educational institution. Drawing on the strength of our alumni, friends, and consortium member universities, and combining that strength with the efforts of our faculty and staff, we are maintaining the IUC today, and I feel that we can develop it still more in the future. With this resolve to continue his legacy, I conclude these remarks. To Dr. Butler: For all you did and all you were, thank you.

*Contributors: Gerald R. Curtis is Burgess Professor of Political Science, Columbia University; Richard Wallace is General Counsel, USHIO America, Inc.; Theodore F. Cook is Professor of History and Director of Asian Studies, William Paterson University; Tracy Dahlby is Frank A. Bennack Jr. Chair in Journalism and Director, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin; David A. Livdahl is Partner and Chief Representative, Beijing Office, Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP; Soichi Aoki is Associate Director and Professor at the IUC.*

#### MEMORIAL FUND

A fund has been established in Ken Butler's honor, dedicated for use by the IUC in Japan. Contributions may be sent to our Stanford office (Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies, Encina Hall, Room E009, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6055). Checks should be made payable to "IUC/Kenneth Butler Memorial Fund."



At the party in 2001 commemorating his "retirement" from the IUC after his second term as Director, Ken Butler is surrounded by former faculty and staff members at the International House of Japan, Tokyo.

## Kenneth D. Butler

### *Abbreviated curriculum vitae*

Born 1930, Oregon, U.S.A.

#### *Education*

B.A., University of Chicago, 1957, with honors; major: classical Chinese  
M.A., Harvard University, 1958; specialization: 19<sup>th</sup>-century China  
Ph.D., Harvard University, 1958; specialization: Far Eastern Languages

#### *Major fellowship*

1960–63, Fulbright Research Fellow, University of Tokyo

#### *Employment*

1950–54, U.S. Navy, computer and radar technician  
1963–67, Assistant Professor of Japanese, Yale University  
1967–77, 1995–2001, 2003–2008, Director, Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies  
1977–2009, President, Butler Consulting, Inc.

#### *Selected publications*

Dr. Butler's publications included *Kurofune gensō: Seishin bunsekigaku kara mita NichiBei kankei*, co-authored with Kishida Shū (first ed. Trelville, 1986; repub. Seidosha, 1992; repub. Kawade Shobō, 1994); "The Heike Monogatari and the Japanese Warrior Ethic," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 26 (1966); and "The Textual Evolution of the Heike Monogatari," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969). In addition he authored many articles in English and Japanese on language training and on business, he was general editor of *Integrated Spoken Japanese I*, vols. 1 and 2 (IUC), and he was co-author and general editor of seven other Japanese language textbooks and ten English language textbooks.