

Kazuo Hasegawa

President Emeritus, Tokyo Dementia Care and Research Training Center

I received a sudden telephone call from the US one night in the autumn of 1988. Dr. Butler invited me to be the Harold Hatch lecturer in the US for one month period. This was the start of my encounters with Dr. Butler.

I stayed at the Department of Geriatrics and Adult Development of the Mount Sinai Medical Center attached to the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in Manhattan, New York. My travel and lodging fees were provided and I was allotted 1,000 dollars and in return was obliged to give one lecture a week at the Mount Sinai and during that period could do any research I wanted.

On April 13, I accompanied Dr. Butler to attend a research meeting sponsored by the Brookdale Foundation held in a town called Tarrytown on the outskirts of New York. It was about a 40 minute train trip from New York's Central Station. Famous scholars came from the west coast also participated in what was a closed research meeting like the ones at Japan's Ministry of Welfare. During casual conversation in the taxi, Dr. Butler asked me a question. "How many hours a week do you spend trying to procure operating funds for your department of the school?"

I was surprised to hear that, because

except for the holding of special events I normally made no efforts to gather funds. He mentioned that he had been working to collect funds since that morning. He said that he went around with an attorney to ask wealthy people for funding and in return gave a contract stating their name would be displayed on a silver plate as a commemorative mark. He had a different expression than usual on his face and I remember thinking he sometimes had a tough job.

During my stay at the Center, I didn't have even the time for casual discussions of academic issues or even just to get a picture taken of the two of us, but I consider myself lucky to have been able to talk with him at times. His apartment bordered Central Park opposite the hospital. He invited me over to dinner where we and his 8 year old daughter had dinner cooked by his wife who is now deceased. When my stay was just above over, I invited Dr. Butler along with his main staff to a Japanese restaurant in town where we had a fun sukiyaki party as a gesture of thanks. I can still remember Dr. Butler stepping out into the road to hail a taxi for the return trip home. He was an impressive figure with a long frame and a casual smile that was always gentle and



Dr. Hasegawa along with Dr. Butler in his office in 2009

charming. Of course he was also probably popular with the ladies.

Since our meeting when we invited him to the 4th International Geriatric Psychiatric Conference in August 8, 1989 we have continued our friendship but have not met face to face. Some 20 years later I was unexpectedly invited as the planning committee for the International Longevity Center (ILC) on September 21, 2009 by Professor Butler and participated in the First Dinner Salon – "Alzheimer's Disease and Aging Society" held at Columbia University School of Public Health (Director Linda Ford). Participants were 19 people from five countries: the US, UK, France, Japan, and the Dominican Republic and were all distinguished members in medicine, public health, psychology,

economics, public service and pharmaceutical companies. It was a conference where wine flowed and guest enjoyed their dinner. After a brief greeting from Dr. Butler, the conference took the form of opinions giving one after another and then changed to debate.

The main gist was whether there was an international strategy for dealing with Alzheimer's that was increasing along with aging populations as well as how to procure financial assets and research funds for developing new drugs, etc. I strongly emphasized that regional care would become the central strategy, and the need for training nursing personnel as well as creating an urban environment where even those with Alzheimer's could feel secure. Right after my remarks,

people praised me saying they were strongly impressed with Dr. Hasegawa's opinions and I felt that the flow of discussion had changed course. I felt that I had at least expressed some information from Japan that ought to be made known.

The next day I visited Professor Butler's office along with Mr. Shinichi Ogami from the ILC-Japan and Dr. Masako Osako who is director of the ILC Global Alliance Secretariat, and he talked intimately with us. His attitude and bearing appeared completely unchanged from that when I first met him in 1989 and was impressed with his warm personality.

He received the Pulitzer Prize in 1976 for his book "Why Survive? Being Old in America." was published by Medical-Friend in 1991. This fine book takes a cutting edge view of problems of old age based on numerous statistical materials and information yet the predictions made of current problems of the elderly shows the clarity and perception of the author. He points out for example the fixed bias against elderly people and Ageism and also points out that the "Greatest loss in old age is that choices vanish" and the contradiction of a "wealthy society where elderly people are

poor" expressed in such way that I think it accurately portrays the plight of elderly people in contemporary society. This "Why Survive?" book asks the question of what value is continuing to live when tragedy awaits us for growing old.

The preface to this book describes the author's own beginnings. His parent's divorced when he was a baby so he was left with his mother's grandparents. He spent his childhood helping out at his grandfather's chicken ranch. After his grandfather died he was raised by his stalwart grandmother. Being raised by this elderly person gave him a single-minded purpose, the ambition to study medicine, and shows his starting point in his progress toward geriatrics. He eventually became famous as a geriatric psychiatrist, and after completing work at this first post at the National Institute of Mental Health, was appointed director of the Department of Geriatrics at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and was finally named director and president of the ILC (International Longevity Center) thanks to his superb powers of discernment. I regard that work as a gift to him from God.

I only met him in person for a short time but my encounter with Dr. Butler was a priceless experience that I treasure.

Takako Sodei

Professor Emeritus at Ochanomizu University
President of the Japan Association for Age-Free Society

I think I first became aware of the word "Ageism" in 1976 right after Dr. Butler received the Pulitzer Prize. I remember at the time receiving a strong shock after reading an essay Dr. Butler wrote in the "National Observer" I subscribed to which is an American weekly newspaper (closed in 1977).

The word 'Ageism' is itself quite a new word but what gave me a stronger impression was a reference to elderly women living alone who is given the double discrimination of sexism and ageism. "The miserable state that elderly single women fall into has been overlooked even by women's lib advocates" he writes with pointed words. This type of comment had a strong impact on me since I had just started out on my career as a researcher in women's studies and gerontology. At the time, goals for women's liberation were mostly aimed at attaining economic independence for married middle-aged women and it is no exaggeration to say that woman's liberation (advocates) hadn't even considered elderly women.

It was Dr. Butler who stated that the stereotyped image of "elderly people as poor, sickly, and indecisive" must be eliminated; and that in order to escape from their current desperate situation they must take an active part in society and in politics.

The seeds that Dr. Butler planted with his merciful gaze always directed upon social minorities such as the elderly, women, and minority races have begun to bear fruit today in countries throughout the world.

Even in Japan the government has in recent years, started to act to resolving the plight of the elderly women living alone and in finding work and dwellings for elderly citizens. The barriers faced by the elderly in Japanese society are higher than those in the US and eliminating ageism (age discrimination) and active participation by the elderly in society and politics are steps that are essential for achieving an ultra-elderly society that can ride out the 21st Century.