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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 parents 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.

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.

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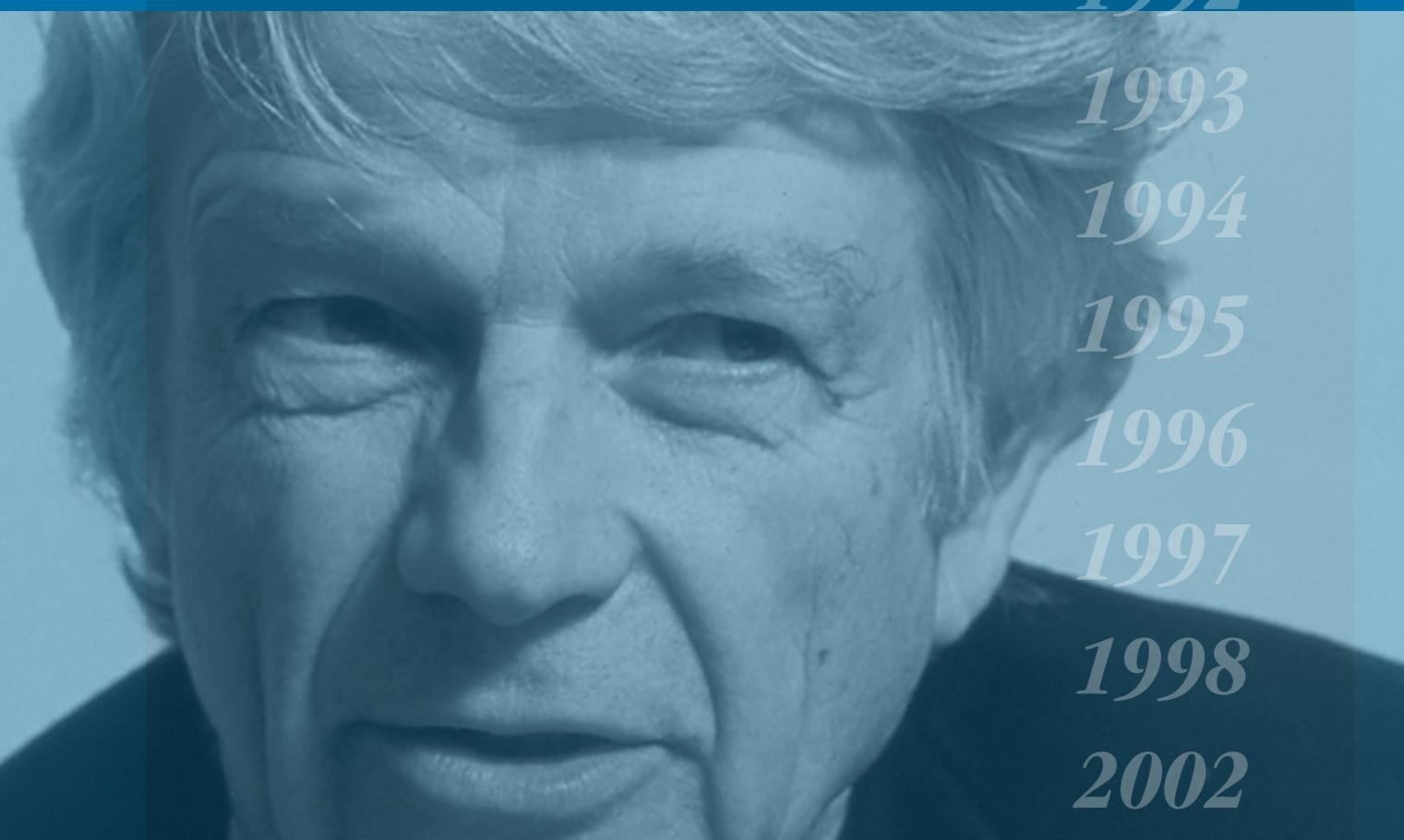
As a philosopher and Advocate...

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And then...



Dr. Sodei with Dr. Butler at the Symposium on Aging in Osaka, Japan, 1995