

Teruko Kanehira

Advisor to the Japan Legal Support Center

I first had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Butler in 1994 while attending a symposium held in New York. The symposium theme was, "Aiming for an energetic elderly society" where experts from Japan and the US discussed problems and issues in aging occurring in their own countries.

I was then working as the vice-governor of Tokyo and gave an address mainly from the viewpoint of elderly life in metropolitan areas.

According to a survey by the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, after reaching retirement age, the elderly still have a lively interest in working and hobbies but on the other hand are also gripped by anxiety about nursing care as they grow older. I also recall that with

the sudden increase in families consisting only of elderly persons there was particular emphasis on the growing need for promoting societal nursing care measures and also a need for creating a change in awareness in individuals, family and regional society.

I have been deeply concerned with helping the elderly due to their weak position in society and poured my heart and soul into drawing up effective planning as one of Government experts on societal welfare. I was deeply interested in how the Americans would react to the measures taken by the Tokyo metropolitan government.

However Dr. Butler gave me quite a shock when he next gave his keynote address. He repeatedly stated that the

elderly cannot be summed up as weak people, and also that each and every one of them has the will and the ability to become independent and pursue their own life possibilities.

Dr. Butler's speech was a powerful message saying that the experience, knowledge and insight of the elderly can be effectively used to create a more dynamic society and serve as an actual asset. I saw this speech as overlapping the powerful "Don't give us support, give us jobs!" appeal message at the 10 year UN summary conference disabled persons.

In Japan, where nearly one-third of the population is nearing 65 or over, I am wondering how much we might lose from failing to make use of the experience and capabilities of our elderly.

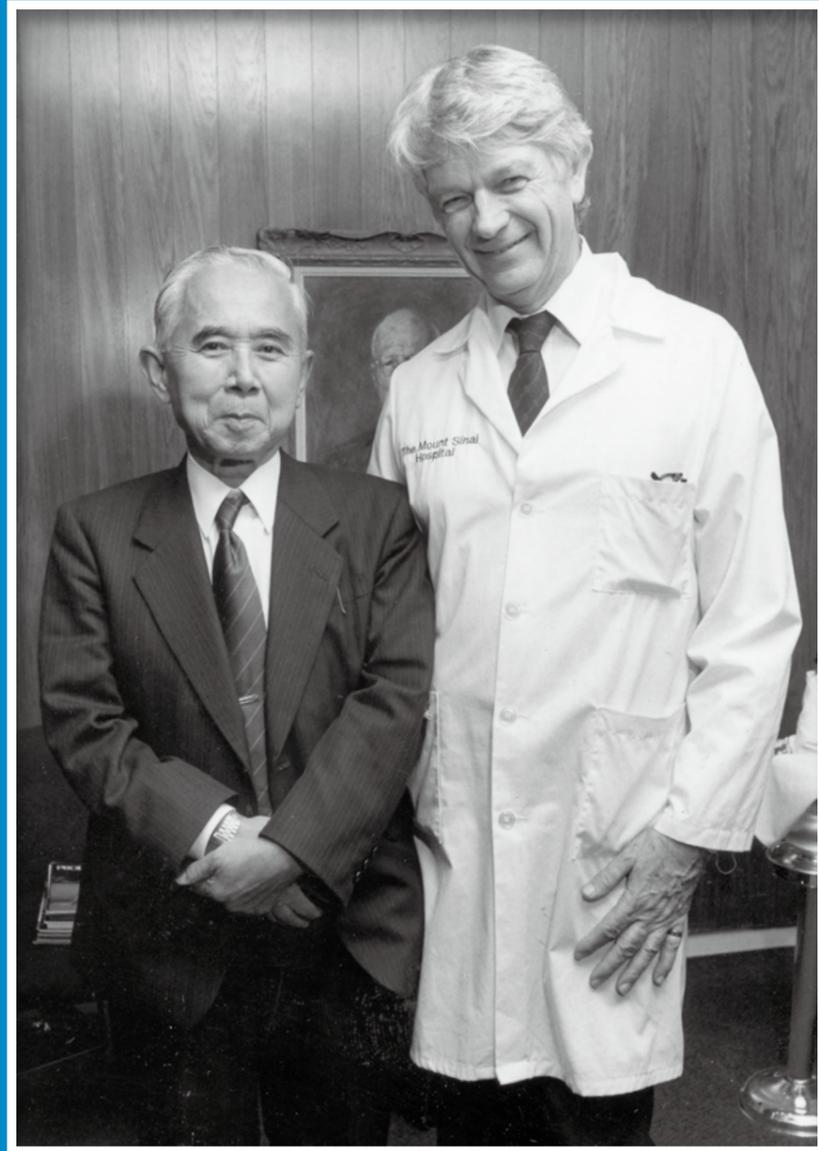
Since then some 14 years have passed and I myself am now over 80 years old.

I think I would enjoy contributing my own experience and knowledge to society while still maintaining the same interface with it as I have up to now. Finally I would like to again express my admiration at the judgment and insight that Dr. Butler provided us.



Ms. Kanehira giving speech at "Aiming for an energetic elderly society" in New York 1994





Dr. Ibe, the first president of ILC-Japan and Dr. Butler



What he did

1927
1934
1953
1955
1963
1968
1969
1970
1975
1976
1978
1979
1982
1983
1984
1985
1987
1988
1989
1990
1991
1992
1993
1994
1995
1996
1997
1998
2002
2003
2004
2005
2007
2008
2009
2010