



A·P·O news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

Gene Yamada, doyen of the APO, retires

He was the “midwife” who helped those who conceptualized the APO to transform their idea into reality and who stayed on for the next 42 years to nurture and help it mature into what it is today—an organization that spans 19 countries in Asia and the Pacific, with a combined population of one-third of the world’s total, and with activities that have grown to a scope and volume that can only be described as breathtaking. He is Yuji Yamada, Special Adviser to the APO Secretary-General. In June this year, Gene—as he is known to many—will retire from active service in the APO Secretariat.

Gene has been variously and fondly described by those who know him as “wise,” “very knowledgeable,” “diplomatic,” “reflective,” “a walking encyclopedia on the APO,” and “a workaholic.” Almost his entire adult life was devoted to establishing and building the APO. In this, he is clearly focused and single-minded. Although the APO was not conceived by him, once established, Gene adopted it and looked after it as if it were his very own. The day he “dreads” has come to let go of his charge and watch it grow and develop further from a distance. For him who has given so much to the organization, the parting will not be easy. It will also be difficult for those who have worked closely with him in the Secretariat and in the national productivity organizations, benefited from his wisdom and counsel, and come to respect him for his devotion and diligence in his work, despite the fact that his health in recent years has not always been in top form.

Although Gene joined the newly established APO Secretariat as a staff member when the APO was formed in May 1961, his involvement with the APO dated back to 1959 when the preparatory work was set in motion. He was then an officer in the Japan Productivity Center, now the Japan Productivity Center for Socio-Economic Development, which provided secretarial support for the birth of the APO.

Gene’s first assignment in the APO Secretariat was as its Administration Officer. In 1972, he was transferred to the Industry Division, where he rose to become its head as well as Special Assistant to the Secretary-General in 1980. He relinquished his leadership of the Industry Division in 1995, but continued to serve as Special Assistant (designated Special Adviser in 1999) to the Secretary-General.

The dedication and commitment of Gene to the mission and activities of the APO are without parallel. His long service will also be difficult to match. He was honored with the Award for Special Contribution to International Economic Cooperation by the Government of Japan in 1993. This was followed by his appointment as a Commandeur de l’Ordre



Mr. Yuji Yamada

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**“Think like a man
of action, act like a
man of thought.”**

Henri Louis Bergson

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Gene Yamada, doyen of the APO, retires.... *(Continued from page 1)*

des Palmes Académiques by the Government of France in 1995 for his role in promoting closer relations between France and Asian countries.

When asked for his perception of the future role of the APO Secretariat in supporting the productivity movement in the Asia-Pacific region, Gene had the following to say: “This may sound paradoxical, perhaps even absurd to some, but my picture of the APO being truly successful in its mission is when it has worked itself out of a job. To be sure, the productivity concept it champions will always be essential to create more national wealth with the ultimate aim of achieving a better quality of life for all people, keeping in mind that we have to make incessant efforts for the above objective because we can

never increase productivity too much. What I mean is that if the APO could persuade every country in the Asia-Pacific region to put in place productivity enhancement as a national strategy for development; enable them to establish vibrant, effective, and self-sustaining productivity movements; and encourage the establishment of cooperative alliances within and beyond the country to achieve greater mutual productivity gains, then the APO as a regional institution will no longer be necessary. To me, this will be the best testimony that the APO has fulfilled its mission. While this is already happening, it will take a while longer before the mission is completed. In the meantime, it is most important not to lose sight of this vision.” 