

TH Prof. Higuchi Showery

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Public Lecture (#2 of 3) Takeru Higuchi Memorial Lectures , Thursday October 3, 1991 Alderson Auditorium, 8:00 p.m./Kansas Union, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

The Fine Line Between Persistence and Obstinacy in Research

Thompson

Peter Higuchi

Vice-Chancellor Mrs. Aya Higuchi Brinkman

Mrs. Aya Higuchi, ~~family members~~, and faculty and guests of this distinguished University. I am greatly honored to be invited to give the 1991 ⁴⁰⁰ Takeru Higuchi Lectures. And I am not alone in wishing to express my gratitude to AYA HIGUCHI for establishing this lectureship and also to the Departments of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Pharmacy, for supporting it.

Professor Higuchi, or "Tak," as we always knew him, was, among his many other qualities, an inspiration to scientific colleagues. What stands out in my memory of him, is his delight, his enthusiasm, whenever someone asked for a few minutes of his time to discuss a particular problem they were having with their research.

It didn't matter that the puzzle might be somewhat distant from his own field. . . . he would quickly tap into some fundamental principle that lay at the heart of the problem, and he was ^{then} half-way to solving it. Tak's forté was learning and knowing the FUNDAMENTALS of chemistry and biology, and his hobby was problem-solving.

This is one of the reasons that I always looked forward to seeing

him at the meetings of the Scientific Board of ALZA. Before setting off for Palo Alto, I would collect one or two of the current refractory research problems from ~~everyone~~ ^{my colleagues} in the lab, so that I could try them out on the Professor! (As I mentioned in my lecture this afternoon), in the hallway of our lab there is a long blackboard labeled "UNTESTABLE HYPOTHESES." Anyone in the lab who can think of an experiment, can become 1st author with no further work. Every time I would return from Palo Alto (through the whole decade of the 1970's).....I would write a note,..."Tak Higuchi thinks we should try such and such....." but, he always declined to be credited.

~~many~~ Now I think ~~some~~ ^{some} of Tak's success should be credited to AYA - ! ^{Erish}

Another memory I have of Tak was his **persistence**. He would return to a very tough problem again and again, until he had mastered it. This lecture is about **persistence in research**, and in its way I wish it to be a tribute to Takeru Higuchi.

→ First, though, I will follow my wife's rule about any lecture given in the evening or 'after-dinner.' She says, "No matter how short it seems when you have it all written out, CUT it by ONE THIRD!"

Her entreaty always reminds me of the story of the great Russian author, DOSTOEVSKY, who received the following letter from his