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ATTENDING THE MEMORIAL SERVICE OF DR. DEMING

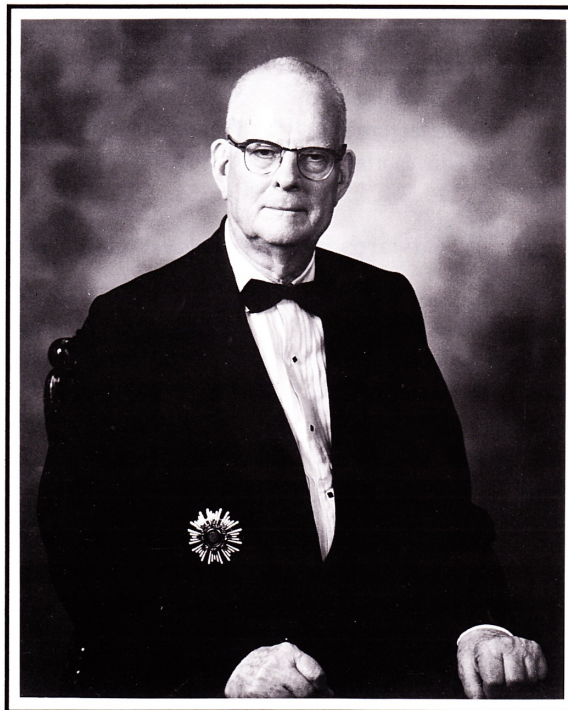
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Junji NOGUCHI
Managing Director
Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers

It was Wednesday, December 29, 1993, and a powdery snow again was falling on Washington, DC. It blew up from the street and blurred our vision. There

close down.

Dr. Deming's second daughter Diana, who had visited Japan several times and in later years always



were few cars and even fewer pedestrians, and the scene had a near-colorless aspect of monochrome. With the temperature at 4°C below zero and the snowfall having already reached 6 inches, the preceding night's weather forecast had it that the airport could possibly

remained at his side, telephoned me last evening. "With the snow like this, I can't tell how many will be able to attend the memorial service," she said. "The church can hold only 300 at most, so I think you ought to come early," She went on to say that the church would open

at 11:45 in the morning, and that the memorial service, scheduled to begin at one in the afternoon, would last an hour. So I left the hotel at 11:00 a.m. with Mr. Kozo Koura, who had traveled with me from Japan.

St. Paul's Church stood among office buildings on the street near Washington Circle to the northwest of the White House. Diana greeted us in the waiting room with her husband, and 30 to 40 mourners had already arrived. My old acquaintance Dr. "Tribus," formerly a professor at MIT, had flown to Washington from the West Coast a day earlier, although his flight had been delayed by three hours pending receipt of landing permission. The noted producer couple, who had made it possible for Dr. Deming to become known, were there from Colorado, their health resort, and with a familiar air they quipped, "We can't let a little snow beat us." Also present was Mr. Miyano, the resident representative in New York of Takenaka Komuten Co., Ltd., whose flight from the Empire State had arrived on time. With so many familiar faces at the funeral, I hoped Diana's anxiety would prove to be unnecessary.

A fight to the finish

Dr. Deming's Four Day Course, which started December 7 at Universal City on the outskirts of Los Angeles, marked his 30th and the last instruction as slated for 1993. Toward the end he would lecture with an oxygen bomb attached to his wheelchair. During his



final Four Day Course he suffered a violent coughing spasm, which triggered the concern of those in attendance. But he rallied and, quieting them with reassuring gestures, resumed his talk. Earlier in the year, while lecturing in Rochester, Dr. Deming collapsed at the lectern and was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. But reportedly he recovered, and the following morning he returned to the seminar and continued his instruction. His final course ended December 10. Normally he would fly back to Washington soon after its completion, but this time he hesitated. Two days later, December 12, he returned to Washington. At his home a bed was specially prepared in the first floor sitting room, and two nurses had been assigned to care for him. I understand that he passed away in his sleep at 3:00

Dr. W. Edwards Deming –Personal history–

Dr. W. Edwards Deming was born on October 14, 1900 in Sioux City, Iowa. He worked his way through the Electrical Engineering College of the University of Wyoming. He received masters degrees in mathematics and physics from the University of Colorado in 1923, and in 1928 he obtained his Ph. D. at Yale.

In 1928 he moved to Washington, DC, and joined the US Department of Agriculture.

In 1939 Dr. Deming was invited by the National Bureau of Census to become the officer in charge of the census plan based on a sampling method. While at the US Department of Agriculture he met Dr. W. A. Shewhart of the Bell Research Laboratory, and from him Dr. Deming learned the quality control theory. Later, when studying at the University of London, Dr. Deming learned the statistics theory from Prof. R. A. Fisher. During World War II Dr. Deming traveled through the United States giving instruction in statistical quality control to approximately 30,000 persons, among whom were engineers employed by armaments industries and government procurement officers.

In 1946 Dr. Deming became an independent statistics consultant, at the same time assuming a professorship in the graduate school of the University of New York. In December of the same year he came to Japan for the first time as a member of the US Rice Economic Mission.

1950 found Dr. Deming visiting Japan again at the request of Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers to give a series of lectures on statistical quality control. After that he traveled to Japan all of nineteen times, with his final appearance here being in 1991.

From 1980 on Dr. Deming personally led the "Four Day Course," which was given more than thirty times a year and attracted a total of more than 100,000 participants. During his career he actively provided guidance to such major corporations as Ford, AT&T and Minneapolis Honeywell. It is said that there was no company listed in "The Fortune 500" that had not invited Dr. Deming as an instructor.

Dr. Deming's second daughter resides in California, and his third daughter lives in Maryland. He has five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

a.m. on December 20. Certain media publications reported the cause of his death as cancer, but Diana told me it was natural cause. In his later years Dr. Deming had suffered from phlebitis and wore a hearing aid. The old general never stopped fighting through all of 93 years. With him it was literally a fight to the finish. Relief that old general could take was his final rest.

The church opened promptly at 11:45 a.m. On entering we saw more than ten huge stained glass windows depicting various religious figures, among them a bishop clad in a red cassock against a bright blue background. With these forming part of the setting, a Gothic style altar rose at the fore, and to the left a representation of Christ. A choir had assembled on both sides of about ten steps leading to the altar, and behind them towered a pipe organ describing a reverse parabola above their heads. The church became getting crowded and twice we were asked to sit together more closely. Extra chairs had been arranged along the aisles, and at the rear of the center aisle a TV camera was set up so as to relay the proceedings to another room. A twelve page funeral program was distributed among the congregation, and it contained words unfamiliar to “pagans” like us. It may not be proper to say they were all hymns, but there were ten or so chants bearing the indications “solo,” “sung by the choir” or “sung by all.” Worth mentioning is a note that stated three of the hymns had been composed by Dr. W. Edwards Deming.

His home in Washington

Only a few knew, but it had been Dr. Deming’s lifelong ambition to compose music. In January 1993 he conducted an orchestra in Washington that gave the premier performance of four of his religious compositions, an event reported in the Japanese media. In the sitting room on the first floor of his home in Butterworth stood a small grand piano in excellent condition. Prior to his death Dr. Deming’s musical scores would be left on the piano. These religious compositions afforded an insight to better understanding of Dr. Deming’s personality, a man who loved and appreciated Japanese Noh plays.

Diana was not in, but I asked her husband if I could see Dr. Deming’s basement study. Doubtless more than a thousand Japanese had trod the steps leading to it. On one side of the stairway a rail had been installed to allow ascent and descent by a mobile chair, the system specially arranged for Dr. Deming, who had weak legs. Having lost its master, the study looked deserted. His collection of books had grown and many of the volumes

were stacked on the floor. The Japanese dolls and vases that once occupied a considerable amount of shelf space had given way to his books. A number of certificates of commendation had been propped against a bookstand, awards more worthy of being framed and hung on a wall. Many framed photographs were placed around his study, chiefly snapshots of the doctor with his family or friends. On one wall hung a calendar of cloth; he used to have them sent from JUSE every year and personally specified their design and size. The 1994 edition, showing Kyoto’s Golden Pavilion, or Kinkakuji, had been mailed only three weeks earlier. There was a blackboard, and the doctor had chalked on it the name of his newly born third great-grandchild. I recalled that in 1965 Prof. Kaoru Ishikawa had visited the study and was actively discussing with Dr. A. J. Duncan, while using the same blackboard, how to prove the “Amida-lottery” theory.

Dr. Deming had been present, listening attentively to their debate. Now all three doctors are gone.

At one in the afternoon the majestic sound of the pipe organ solemnly permeated the crowded church to announce the start of Dr. Deming’s memorial service. A priest recited from religious scriptures, his intonation bringing to mind a bird flying through a spring sky. The priest would recite and congregation would respond in unison. After repeating this exchange the priest began his retrospect of Dr. Deming. He opened with the statement that, “Dr. Deming’s myriad achievements cannot be described within such a short span of time.” He capsuled Dr. Deming’s early years, scholastic triumphs, assorted accomplishments, and how he had been decorated by Emperor Hirohito and received the National Medal of Technology from the nation’s President. During his presentation the priest made the congregation laugh four times. One anecdote went, “Dr. Deming often asked me questions at church, but my answers seldom convinced him of anything.” Another was, “Whenever I visited him when he was ill, he would see me only after he was fully attired.” Indeed, Dr. Deming lived as a well-mannered person, but, if I may say so, with a touch of clumsiness.

US media coverage

Dr. Deming was a devout Catholic. Even when staying in Japan he never missed Sunday mass. Most of his income derived from his Four Day Course, and the majority of it he donated to a neighborhood church and to medical facilities. A gentleman like that sometimes will display a certain amount of obstinacy and unso-



(With past Mr. Konosuke Matsushita right in front row when visiting his company November, 1965.)

cialibility in his words and actions, suggesting to us the male version of a grimalkin. American newspapers in their obituaries assigned Dr. Deming titles like “Godfather of Quality,” “Management Theorist,” “American Business Critic,” “Influential Pioneer of Industrial Quality” and so on. While on one had complimenting him with such descriptions as, “He had delivered a powerful shock to international corporate management with his revolutionary concepts” and, “He can be equated with those who contributed to the Industrial Revolution,” on the other they rapped him with expressions like “Stubborn,” “Perverse” and a “Self-assured critic.” But an observation common among all the periodicals was, “He stood tall as the man who helped reconstruct Japan after the war, but as someone largely ignored in America, his own country, for a very long time.” When Dr. Deming was asked, “how he would like to be remembered in his native land, replied, I probably won’t even be remembered.’ He paused and added, “Well may be... as someone who spent his life trying to keep America from committing suicide.” These statements were quoted in many newspapers.

The long queue of parishoners waiting to receive Holy Communion gradually diminished, and by 2:30 the service drew to a close. This was followed by a tea party with Dr. Deming’s family, which took place in another room and was attended by Mrs. Mary Walton, author of “The Deming Management Method,” Mrs. Nancy Mann, who wrote “The Keys to Excellence” and

visited Japan twice, and Miss Barbara Laughton, who accompanied Dr. Deming on the occasion of his final trip to Japan (his liking for beautiful women was well known). Irrespective of time and place, there was always a lovely lady working as his secretary, either a scholar or a journalist. Dr. Deming’s first wife as well as Mrs. Laura Deming, who passed away in 1986, were academicians. Also present were Mr. O. R. Moan from General Motors, who had been Dr. Deming’s favorite pupil; Prof. Yoshida from California State University, Dr. Deming’s immediate disciple and the first among his students to obtain a doctorate; and Prof. Milton Chen of San Diego University, the man who translated Prof. Tatsuo Ikezawa’s “Effective TQC.” I spoke with quite a few of the guests and often heard words to the effect that they had visited JUSE in such and such a year, and had met me at one place or another during this or that year. Mr. and Mrs. Mason of QC-M Productions the couple from Colorado I mentioned earlier, asked for our cooperation, saying, “Although we’ve lost Dr. Deming, we’d like to continue our TV show introducing Japanese enterprises.”

Then all at once I felt hungry, having eaten nothing since breakfast, and left the church. It was still snowing and the leaden sky had grown darker.

A man of “punctuations”

The well-ordered life of Dr. Deming was also well “punctuated,” and it made us feel it was not so much

chance as destiny. He was born in 1900. He started sowing the seeds of SQC in Japan in 1950 and was awarded The Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold and Silver Star by the Japanese Government in 1960. After that he remained in obscurity for twenty years. In 1980 he got into the spotlight in his home country by appearing on the TV program "If Japan Can, Why Can't We?" That year was the clearest punctuation of his life. I met him on a number of occasions while he was biding his time, and failed to give me the impression of a man lost to obscurity. But his sudden burst of energy after 1980 was amazing. Instead of simply criticizing corporate management, he undertook a plan of personally instructing representatives of the industrial realm and giving guidance to enterprises. His Four Day Course was held all of thirty times a year throughout the United States, with an aggregate of over 100,000 persons having studied under him until the time of his passing. It is difficult to imagine this as the conduct of a man who, after having lived in obscurity for twenty years, at age eighty suddenly launched an intensified teaching program that continued under his personal tutelage until only ten days before his demise. What motivated this sudden spurt of energy so powerful that it might make even a demon turn tail and run? Possibly it was his "spirit of defiance" that had been nurtured during his two decades in obscurity, at least that's my analysis. As the man who "spent his life trying to keep America from committing suicide" he carried out his mission precisely according to his intention. I wish he could have lived an even century so he could add another punctuation ending in a zero. Why did he have to bow out so abruptly in only 1993? Looking back over Dr. Deming's long career, I had to admit that I had become more or less of a fatalist, and I found a new punctuation in December of 1993. It came in the form of a report on the revival of American quality as seen in semiconductors and automobiles. The US economy has improved, while Japan's economical conditions remain at a disadvantage. Maybe Dr. Deming was satisfied with the situation... or was it that he could not tolerate Japan's decline. Or perhaps the Great Architect ruled that Dr. Deming need no longer exert efforts, something he most likely would have continued doing, and instead recalled him to the realm of discarnates for a well-earned vacation, thus adding the final punctuation mark to the life of a great man.

Having accepted a dinner invitation, Mr. Koura and I met Diana, her husband, their son and his fiancée in a hotel lobby, from where we adjourned to fine restau-

THE W. EDWARDS DEMING INSTITUTE

4924 BUTTERWORTH PLACE
WASHINGTON 20016
TEL. (202)363-8552 FAX. (202)363-3501

We are pleased to announce that on 22 November 1993 our father, Dr. W. Edwards Deming, established The W. Edwards Deming Institute. The aim of The Institute is to foster understanding of the Deming System of Profound Knowledge to advance commerce, prosperity, and peace. We invite you to support the effort to carry out this aim. Further details concerning The Institute will be forthcoming. Please share this notification with your colleagues.

Diana Deming Cahill

Diana Deming Cahill
Chairman of the Board

Linda Deming Ratcliff

Linda Deming Ratcliff
Vice Chairman of the Board

rant. The White House stood just across the street, and the restaurant walls were lined with pictures of Presidents and senators, each of whom were said to have had peculiar mannerisms or eccentricities. So indeed was the case with Dr. Deming. His actions sometimes would prove to be embarrassing for those closely associated with him, and occasionally make him a laughingstock in the eyes of casual observers. For instance, In Japan and Korea, TV caster asked Dr. Deming "What do you think about TQC in our country?" He replied, "what's that, I don't know." Both interviews were not on air. He ate all kinds of Japanese food. In particular he liked sukiyaki, and only two helpings would never satisfy his big appetite. We mentioned anecdotes like this while dining. Mr. Cahill, Diana's husband, was a lawyer and, bowing to his wife's wishes, they were planning to move from Los Angeles to Dr. Deming's house in Washington. She looked exhausted, but her deep sorrow did not show through. She told us she had been with Dr. Deming almost continuously over the past year.

Through a window we noticed that it had stopped snowing. The Washington Monument soared before our eyes, bathed in golden light and piercing the night sky. Somehow the fact of Dr. Deming overlapped the scene as the image of the man who "spent his life" and finally succeeded in stopping "America from committing suicide." ★

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