

## A Straw Hat

—In memory of Ms. Maki Yoshida—

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Masami ISHII\*<sup>1</sup>

There is a straw hat on my bookshelf which looks slightly worn. It was a gift from Ms. Maki Yoshida, a super lady lawyer who worked as a simultaneous translator for the JMA, providing long-term support enabling the JMA to contribute to global health and, especially, sustaining the JMA’s ability to function as a member of the WMA. And all too soon, she has passed away.

She powerfully and enthusiastically took on any difficult tasks concerning international collaboration when members or even delegates of the JMA tended to be introverted, their main concerns being to re-build community health in Japan and strengthen the domestic health system after WWII.

She stood beside Dr. Eitaka Tsuboi as a sincere interpreter for not only English-Japanese language exchanges but also for transnational cultural exchanges when he took on the responsibilities of being the President of the WMA at the beginning of this new century. In those days, I naturally looked up to this little lady, admiring her from the depths of my heart. All of her actions and attitudes emanated from her high spirit, making her shine.

I was very happy to have the chance to work with her as the JMA executive board member in charge of international affairs after a couple of years. My predecessor had let her go, and it was my first request to recall her. Again, she immediately showed herself to be a full JMA team member. Never mentioning her physical condition, she devoted herself to various tasks for the JMA: simultaneous interpretation, of course, and also administrative work related to international affairs. She was willing to turn



Maki Yoshida (1952–2009)

### WORKING EXPERIENCE

- 2003–05 Private practice as a lawyer
- 2000–02 Freshfields Foreign Law Office
- 1986–2008 Simultaneous conference interpreter

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 1986–96 Keio Yochisha Elementary School, Diplomat School of Simultaneous Interpreters, ISS School of simultaneous interpreters, and Mitsui Co., & Ltd.

### BAR ADMISSION

- 2001 Admitted to practice law in New York.

### EDUCATION

- 2000 Juris Doctor, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, New York, NY
- 1984 Diploma, Instituto Do Brasil E Os Estados-Unidos, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil
- 1977 Master’s Degree (not completed), Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Mass.
- 1977 Graduated three-year course of simultaneous interpretation, ISS School of Simultaneous Interpreters, Tokyo, Japan
- 1976 Bachelor of Arts (top 3% of the class), Keio University, Tokyo, Japan

**LANGUAGES** Fluent in Japanese, English and Portuguese.

**PERSONAL** Married with two children. Extensive experience living and travelling outside Japan. An avid skier and a good cook.

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down other jobs as a lawyer, in many instances choosing to perform work for the JMA instead. She attained the title of lawyer in New York State and then re-joined our JMA team. We recommended her as a legal advisor to CMAAO (The Confederation of Medical Associations of Asia and Oceania) and the proposal was readily accepted by all the CMAAO members.

I never did notice that she was valiantly fighting her final fight with recurrent cancer, to my regret. She was a lady who showed us a flexible yet resilient spirit on all occasions, until she whispered the secret of her true condition to me. Even then, she expressed a desire to join our front line if she could. I do not know if my e-mails provided adequate encouragement for her, since they mostly referred to the details of assignments with very few words concerning her physical condition, despite my being a physician.

We shared an affinity for music, enjoying live performances during our visits with missions on several occasions. She was enthusiastic about standard jazz while I tended to be a lover of classical music. Still, we enjoyed shouting along to pop tunes, including those of the Beatles. This once happened in a beautiful open-air setting under the shining *Stardust*<sup>\*2</sup> at a CMAAO meeting in Thailand.

We visited Jerusalem together at the kind invitation of the Israel Medical Association. It

was hot, sunny weather *On a Clear Day*,<sup>\*3</sup> and she bought a straw hat for herself while we were there. When we were returning to our bus, she said that her hat was too big. I was delighted to ask her to give me the hat as a personal souvenir; fortunately, it fitted my head but not that of our colleague, Mr. Hisashi Tsuruoka, and she kindly gave it to me.

Not long after thus, she eventually passed away.

The straw hat is now watching over me from my bookshelf. Looking at it, I recall *Memories of You*,<sup>\*4</sup> the little dynamite girl, Maki.



From the left: Maki, Hisashi, and the author

\*2 (1927) music: Hoagy Carmichael, lyrics: Mitchell Parish.

\*3 (1965) music: Burton Lane, lyrics: Alan Jay Lerner.

\*4 (1930) music: Eubie Blake, lyrics: Andy Razaf.