

Teruo Yamagata

Advisor and Confidant of Yuki Teikei Founders

Patricia J. Machmiller

Teruo Yamagata, President of the Yukuharu Haiku Society of Japan, Hawaii, and California, has been a long-time advisor, mentor, and friend of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society. When Kiyoshi and Kiyoko Tokutomi first formed Yuki Teikei in July, 1975, it was as the only English-language branch of the Yukuharu Haiku Society. According to Kiyoshi Tokutomi's diary (2010), he first met Teruo Yamagata, who was a Tokyo member of Yukuharu on 14 November 1976. Kiyoshi notes that he traveled with others to San Francisco to meet Yamagata's plane. The two of them quickly established a strong relationship in that first year exchanging letters almost monthly (Tokutomi, 2010).

In the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of Yuki Teikei's Haiku Journal, *Young Leaves*, Yamagata writes: "I joined the Yukuharu Haiku Society in 1955. I was keenly interested in English Haiku having been taught English conversation by Professor R. H. Blyth at university [in 1948]. Because I . . . had the opportunity to visit the U.S.A. on business, I have been to San Jose about fifteen times. I was very fortunate to meet Dr. and Mrs. Falkowski, Mrs. P. Machmiller, and other members of the fledgling [English-language] society. I tried to assist Mr. Tokutomi's activities as much as possible and coordinated between English-speaking and Japanese-speaking people." (2000).

I first met Teruo Yamagata at the ceremony honoring the winners of the first Yukuharu English-Language Haiku Contest in the spring of 1978, held at the Hyatt House on First Street in San Jose, CA. Although I only vaguely remember that first meeting, I remember our second meeting clearly. It was in the fall of 1978. Yuki Teikei had recently become independent of Yukuharu, and I had just become President, taking over from Dr. Edwin Falkowski. I received a call from Kiyoko Tokutomi who very matter-of-factly said, We have a visitor coming from Japan and somebody needs to pick him up at the airport and take him to his hotel, to which I said, Can't he take the shuttle? to which she replied, No. As I would subsequently learn on my later travels to Japan, the Japanese wouldn't dream of allowing a visitor to fend for him- or herself.

As the new president of an organization where Japanese and American cultures merge, you can see that I had much to learn. I picked up Mr. Yamagata and delivered him to his hotel. On the short ride I learned that he was a haiku poet and a member of Yukuharu's Haiku Society in Tokyo; he had spent the summer of 1952 studying at Stanford and had graduated from Gakushuin University in 1953. Now employed by IHI Industries, he was working on the International Space Station as his company's representative. As such, he traveled to Washington, D.C., to visit NASA, to Sacramento, CA, to visit Aerojet, and to San Jose where he would be visiting Lockheed Missiles and Space Company (now Lockheed-Martin). Kiyoshi and Kiyoko had already informed him I worked at Lockheed. Thus began a very special interaction. Over the years from 1978 to 1990 when Mr.

Yamagata would visit Lockheed, at the end of his visit with the Vice President of Space Research and Development, the Vice President's secretary would contact my office saying that the Vice President would like to speak to me (my secretary was always impressed; as a manager in the Missile Systems Division, I didn't get many calls from a Vice President in the Space Systems Division). I would be informed that Mr. Yamagata had completed his business and could I please come pick him up. Which I promptly did. And then the two of us, depending on the time of day, would go for breakfast or brunch or lunch and talk a little about space vehicles and a lot about haiku. We never discussed the war years. It wasn't until I began research for this article that I learned that the house of his birth, the family home where he was born on 2 February 1932 in Tokyo, was burned in the firestorm caused by the U.S. bombing of Tokyo in May 1945.

His present home in Tokyo was built about eight miles from the original family home. I have been a guest there, along with other members of Yuki Teikei, twice: once in April 1997 when we attended Haiku International in Tokyo and once in April 2007 when we were on our way to Hailu Pacific Rim in Matsuyama. On both occasions we were graciously hosted to a nine-course meal prepared by the incomparable Mrs. Takako Yamagata, Yamagata's wife since their marriage in 1965. The last course of the meal in 2007 was vanilla ice cream with cherry blossom sauce made from the cherry blossoms picked from a tree growing in the Yamagata's beautifully landscaped yard.

In the early years of the Society when Mr. Tokutomi and later C. Joy Haas were editing *GEPPPO*, the Yuki Teikei newsletter, Mr. Yamagata was a frequent contributor. Also in the early *GEPPPO*s in the section reporting the votes of the participants, Mr. Yamagata's choices were highlighted to give the *GEPPPO* readers insight into the sensibility and poetic choices of a prominent Japanese haiku reader.

In 1977 he was awarded Yukuharu's prestigious Soshun Prize. He has served as President of Yukuharu since 1992. In January 2013 the Yukuharu Society published its 1000th issue of Yukuharu. Its first issue was published in 1927.

To express his continued support of Yuki Teikei and the Tokutomis in 2000 Mr. Yamagata along with his wife, Takako, traveled to San Jose to participate in the celebration of Yuki Teikei's twenty-fifth anniversary. Yamagata has been a constant contributor to the *GEPPPO* and Yuki Teikei's yearly membership anthology. On the next two pages are some of his haiku from those publications:

No car remaining
at the large shopping center
starry night deepens
1979

Still the same message
on the station message
board—remaining coldness
1983/1984

Today not a soul
to be seen in the garden—
voice of the turtle
1983/1984

In sleeping mountains
unexpectedly I found
a crematory
1984

someone called to me
from the river's other side
gathering of herbs
1984

short cut
across campus
early summer
1990/1991

unsettled accounts
almost seem to multiply
think I'll take a nap
1997?

each garden stone
comes from somewhere different
the departing spring
2000

still quick to detect
the blink of a thing alive
hawk in a cage
2000

no one comes to see
the psychiatric patient
wild chrysanthemum
2000

still clearly marked
twenty-fifth anniversary
the old calendar
2001

naked light bulb
hanging from an old tree
summer night fair
2001

occasionally
hidden in kanji
a winter fly
2001

winter confinement
made more bearable
old detective books
2003

now waiting alone
at the once crowded bus stop
birds twittering
2005

returning
the way he came
an inchworm
2006

the new calendar
from the southern hemisphere
how shall I hang it?
2007

at the bus stop
leaving behind me
a grasshopper
2008

in my mind ascending
the outdoor spiral stairs
into the starry night
2009

letter is short
postscript is long
spring sorrow
2010

this library
a stronghold for me
summer vacation
2010

going upstream/downstream
it makes little difference
milky way
2010

in this town
I am a complete stranger
autumn twilight
2010

samurai
never breaks his word
chrysanthemum
2010

a boy runs after
his father never catching him
revolving lantern
2010

now it seems
taller and stronger
leafless tree
2010

wrecked ship mast
swallowed up again
winter sea
2010

peeled orange!
half of her life story
only outer skin
2010

drafting board
moved a little to one side
poinsettia
2011

astronomical observatory
no longer manned
snow mountain
2011

teacher and students
exchange glances
spring thunder
2011

someone is smoking
while looking away
tulip
2011

no discount today
yet something extra
carnation
2011

visiting the grave
of R. H. Blythe
distant thunder
2011

all along the coast
still several thousand missing
look! a shooting star
2011

nobody knows
about the abandoned mine
remaining snow
2012

just landing
at the local airport
snow flurry
2012

dolls whispering
in the dead of night
plan Doll Festival
2012

the tower clock
does not keep good time
longer day
2012

aircraft carrier
approaches the harbor
on the spring tide
2012

lacking sunburned arms
the professor looks
young for his age
2012

without reservation
staying at a highway motel
jasmine waits for him
2012

travelling alone
repeating the Buddha's name
through a withered field
2013

my old cat
sleeping by the fireside
a one-way chat
2013

the helicopter
rising from the field
dancing withered pampas grass
2013

References:

Tokutomi, Kiyoshi. 2010. *The Diary of Kiyoshi Tokutomi*. Translated by Tei Matsushita Scott.

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Yamagata, Teruo. 2000. "Yukuharu Beginnings of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society," in *Young Leaves, 25th Anniversary Issue of the Yuki Teikei Haiku Society*. Edited by Patricia J. Machmiller and June Hopper Hymas, 61. San Jose, CA: Yuki Teikei Haiku Society.

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Takako Yamagata (Teruo's wife), Patricia Machmiller, Teruo Yamagata
at the home of Patrick and D. Claire Gallaghers', May, 2000
(Photograph by Patrick Gallagher)