

September 14, 2011

In Memory of Kunihiko Matsuo

It was with great sadness that EPRINC learned of the sudden death of Mr. Kunihiko Matsuo on August 28th in London, so far from his home and family. Matsuo-san was the recently retired Chairman of the Japanese oil company, International Petroleum Exploration Company or INPEX. He was an iconic figure in the Japanese petroleum industry with a career spanning both government and private sector service.

I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of my family, EPRINC, and many in the American petroleum community who knew him, to express our sincere condolences to his immediate family and his colleagues throughout INPEX and the Japanese petroleum community

I considered him both a colleague and a friend and I would like to take this opportunity to share some personal memories of my meetings with him. I first met him in the late 1970's and at that time I was a young analyst at the U.S. Department of Energy and visited Japan for the first time. I gave a briefing to the members of the board of the Japanese National Oil Corporation on U.S. petroleum stockpile policy. He was a member of the board of JNOC at the time and I recall to this day that his questions were both probing and insightful. He was not afraid to explore new ideas and I always felt he had an open mind and global view of world events. He had an unusual curiosity for political and economic developments, not only in the United States, but also throughout the world. The highlight of all my visits to Japan was sitting down to dinner with Matsuo-san where I was introduced not only his insights of developments in world petroleum markets, but the intricacies of Japanese culture and cuisine seldom open to visitors from the U.S. I always made sure we had time to meet on all my visits to Japan.

I also remember his enduring kindness. When my children were quite young, Pokeman was all the craze in the United States. This was well over ten years ago and all Pokeman toys and games were unobtainable in the U.S. During my visit to Japan he went out of his way to take me to a special store so I could purchase the precious items for my children. Years later when my entire family visited Japan he went out of his way to extend his famous hospitality to all members of my family. To this day my children recall meeting the famous Matsuo-san.

Although he will be missed terribly by his family and friends, these memories of intellectual pursuits, professional accomplishments, and kindness to friends and visitors will be remembered well into the future.

Lucian Pugliaresi