

I never had the privilege of collaborating scientifically with Tihiro, but my interactions with him while I was at GA left a strong impression. I recall first meeting Tihiro when in 1975, as a graduate student nearing graduation, I visited GA for a job interview. For my interview with Tihiro, I was led into his office by an assistant. Tihiro shook my hand, then with no further comment took about 4 minutes to read through my journal publication that was attached to my file. During that time I just sat there in silence while he speed-read through the article. He absorbed it all instantaneously, then proceeded to ask a few direct, insightful questions based on what he just read. After that we proceeded to a “standard” interview, and he was warm and friendly. I was struck with his immediate telescopic focus on the technical work before beginning conversation.

A few months later I showed up at GA for my first day of work. I again was led into Tihiro’s office. We had a short discussion – after some welcoming pleasantries, he said that I would not be assigned to any particular project or group. Rather, I should just take some time to read about the work going on in the GA fusion program, and establish my own perspective on it – basically do whatever I wished! I was again struck with Tihiro’s approach. Amazingly open-minded to let a new employee have such freedom.

This went on for about three months. I was having a wonderful time – reading all about doublets, MHD stability, all that was going on in the GA fusion effort. At the lunch table, others would ask me what project I work on or what I was doing – I would answer “nothing.” Then one day, I passed Tihiro in the hall – he noticed me and also asked what project I was working on. I said none. I think he forgot about me. Had I not run into him, who knows how long I would have continued doing “nothing.” He said its time to join a project – and offered to me that I could join either the theory group or experiment. Whichever I wished. Again, an unorthodox and open-minded approach to a new hire. Then I became a “normal” member of the DII-A experimental group.

I worked for two years at GA. During that time, I had the pleasure of observing Tihiro’s amazing intellectual output – how he administered the fusion program while generating a flood of brilliant ideas on a dizzying array of topics. The force of his intellect dominated the fusion program at GA at that time. If there was a meeting with 30 people and Tihiro walked into the room, the entire dynamic would change instantaneously. Not because he was the boss, but because the scientific standards for the discussion were suddenly elevated.

Observing Tihiro’s approach to science (and management) left an indelible impression upon me that has persisted for decades. He also set a calm tone at GA that complemented the intense scientific drive. Tihiro’s unique approach to problem-solving and scientific opportunities led to a lifetime of amazing scientific creativity and productivity.