

TIHIRO OHKAWA

Tihiro Ohkawa was a brilliant scientist and a treasured colleague. His curiosity seemed to know no bounds, and when he was curious, he had a way of making a major contribution to that research area. We were so lucky that he spent the majority of his career being curious about and contributing to fusion research. More than many, Tihiro focused not only on the science but also on the potential for the ultimate applications of fusion. It was this dual focus and his position in a company that made nuclear reactors that made leaders in the AEC/ERDA office willing to invest in General Atomic back in the 1970's. And it was Tihiro's legendary scientific acumen that gave him access to the highest levels of government in Japan, resulting in a proposal by Prime Minister Fukuda to President Carter for collaboration in fusion research. Ultimately, Japan provided millions of dollars for hardware for the fusion facility at GA in exchange for access to the facility for Japanese researchers, much to the benefit of both parties. In this way, GA became a laboratory for international scientific collaboration as well as for fusion.

Tihiro had a discipline that used to astonish me. Every day he "invented" something, meaning he found a new way of looking at something. Many of his ideas went in the wastebasket, of course, but many were incorporated into his research.

Regarding fusion, I will always remember his admonition to "Listen to the plasma." Most of us tried to do that, but Tihiro did it best. The fusion program and the world lost a uniquely gifted person when we lost Tihiro Ohkawa.