

Some Parting and Humble Words

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Since my earliest memories of Professor Randy Thrasher are tied directly to some key decisions in my own life, it is impossible to divorce these recollections from the present occasion of his retirement. I decided to come to Okinawa in 1995 from Korea at the request of the Director of the University of Maryland's overseas program, known then as the Asian Division. I'd planned to continue with Maryland for the remainder of my teaching career, but those plans changed after eleven years with the Asian Division.

An opportunity to teach part time with Okinawa Christian Junior College came open in 2003, and after a couple of years, another opportunity presented itself. Brief conversations with Professor Kenjiro Higa and Professor Randy Thrasher confirmed to me that the newly-formed Okinawa Christian University would be an ideal place for me to plant some roots.

The vast community of administrators, scholars, and students at the University of Maryland had been much more transient and, thus, more disconnected from one another than what I saw on the OCU campus. The short-lived positive encounters with colleagues and students who largely saw themselves as merely passing through the island stood in stark relief to the calm easy-going atmosphere on the OCU campus and the conversations I would have periodically with Professor Thrasher before I finally joined the faculty in 2005.

Even as I was trying to finish up my own doctoral research in psycholinguistics, Professor Thrasher never failed to keep his door open to me

for any discussions I might feel a need to take up with him. Brief talks about, say, Noam Chomsky's ideas on deep structure or George Lakoff's contributions to the field of cognitive semantics would sometimes grow into much longer dialogues in which I would invariably hear some exceptionally useful gem of information or insight I might use for my own study.

What I will miss most about Professor Thrasher's presence on this campus is his patience, kindness, and honesty. I have learned a great deal about how to be a better colleague, how to share my experiences and perspectives, how to work with others and to take some time to be still and to listen. Of course, these qualities are part of an unending process of development for me. Nevertheless, the most valuable lessons he has shown have been through examples, which are connected to his sense of patience.

Never once has he turned me away for a talk, long or short, about any matters personal or professional that I felt needed addressing. With great patience, he always listened to my ideas, my worries and misgivings, and never failed to provide some kind and honest feedback. I think that these qualities about Professor Thrasher will remain lodged firmly in my memory as I continue in my work here and try, as I might, to live up to the example he has set before me. I wish Professor Thrasher much happiness and delight and relaxation in his time off from work on campus here. May the new flowers he plants continually bloom.