

Mrs. Yamashita's Remarks Upon Receiving the 2001 Special Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Community Dentistry-International

More than 20 years ago, my husband began applying fluoride to improve the children's dental health in his native town. There was a lot of resistance to this by other local dentists who did not understand public dental health issues.

After years of hardship and hard work, his activities slowly gained wider support by local citizens and dentists. Later, he broadened his activities to a national level through the help of new friends and supporters. During this time, I remember how his life was one long and tough fight with many obstacles in his path. Local people, dentists, our city and prefectural offices, even the national health and welfare ministry of Japan all lacked a clear understanding of public dental health.

While fighting dental complacency and the status quo in Japan, he gained many strong supporters in the United

States and beyond. It is through the support, cooperation, and contributions of these wonderful and understanding people that we can now see slight signs of hope for the acceptance of water fluoridation in Japan.

Regrettably, my husband died before seeing the first municipal water fluoridation in Japan. But his friends and supporters have continued the effort to make fluoridation a reality in Japan and elsewhere. Our goal is to improve public dental health conditions through fluoridation, not only in Japan, but in all countries of the world where it is not yet available.

I would like to thank the American Association of Public Health Dentistry for this important award on behalf of my late husband, Dr. Fumio Yamashita. I would also like to thank Dr. Alice Horowitz, Dr. Herschel Horowitz, Dr. John-g-bai Kim, Dr. Jim-bom Kim and many others I have not specifically named here today who

helped or contributed to his work.

I am also very grateful to my husband's Japanese friends and colleagues, who are still fighting for, and actively working to improve, the Japanese public dental health system. I also want to thank those people who supported him here in the United States and in other countries. Your work is making a difference in people's lives around the world.

I also would like to thank all of you here today for this award. I thank all of these dear people from the bottom of my heart for their support and encouragement of my husband and me. If my husband were here today, I am sure he would be delighted and honored to receive this distinguished award. He might also say that he must hurry home to Japan and continue his work in promoting water fluoridation, where it has yet to become a reality.

Thank you all very much.