

In memoriam: Masashi Egami, pioneer of the Japanese specialty gases industry

On April 16, 2017, Masashi Egami, widely regarded as the founder of Japan's specialty gas industry, sadly passed away at the age of 103.

Egami was the Chairman and the Founder of Takachiho Chemical Industrial and Takachiho Trading Company. He was born on January 10, 1914, in Kurume in Fukuoka Prefecture and in 1939, he graduated from the Tokyo Institute of Technology with a degree in Applied Chemistry.

After graduation, Egami worked at Showa Densen Denryu Laboratory. When World War II broke out, he was drafted into the Army Aviation of the Narashino Air Force Regiment where he worked as an engineer commission officer in the rocket fuel division. After the War, in 1946, he worked at a research lab, in Hodogaya Kagaku, which sent him to work on a project at Tohoku University, where he was exposed to the world of industrial and high purity gases for the first time.

In 1949, in a workshop rented from Daiwa Denki in the Shinagawa Ward in Tokyo, Egami developed a method to purify argon, which later became his first product. In 1950, he founded Takachiho



Aerial view of ceremony hall.

Trading Company and, in 1958, Takachiho Chemical Industrial Company, named after the Takachiho Mountain Range, located in Miyazaki Prefecture in Kyushu, where he grew up. He dedicated the rest of his career to expanding the specialty gas industry in Japan.

On September 18, 2017 Takachiho held an event at the International House of Japan, in Tokyo, Roppongi to celebrate his life accomplishments and his entrepreneurship as the founder of the specialty gases industry in Japan.

Keynote speakers included Daisuke Haraguchi, the President of Riverfield,

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which manufactures surgical robotic equipment for the medical field, and Takayuki Kawaguchi, the President of RESONIC JAPAN, which specializes in the development of measurement systems for complete inertia properties. Both companies were founded as Tokyo Institute of Technology spin-off ventures and dedicated their young venture spirit to Egami. Other guest

speakers included Junichi Hanna, Emeritus Professor of Tokyo Institute of Technology, Masataka Tamura, past president of Osaka Sanso (OSK), a previous company in The BOC Group (now part of Air Liquid Japan), Atushi Takahashi, Measurement Analysis Laboratory Manager of Toyota Technical Development Corporation, and Tsuneaki Maeda, Special Director Fellow, of the

Professionals' Network in Advance Instrumentation Society, a NPO (non-profit organization).

Current President and daughter, Maki Egami, spoke at the service and said, "Today's gathering is about the next generation, inheritance and succession of my father, Masashi Egami's spirit of entrepreneurship and founding of the specialty gas industry."

Other key features of the celebration included the displays of the first ultra-precise giant balance scale built by Masashi himself in 1969 and corn, potatoes, flower beans brought directly from Misaka, the company outing and a farm in Yamanashi Prefecture. Egami's love of nature and animals was displayed through his pictures, his altar covered with flowers, branches, soil, and animals (not hunted – natural deaths) all originating from Misaka. The home-made altar also included nine flowers, made with gas cylinder valves, lighted using Takachiho-made fluorescent light bulbs produced in Takachiho's fluorescent light bulb plant.

Although saddened by his sudden loss, Takachiho will, by following Egami's example, keep on fulfilling Takachiho's company mission statement, "To make contributions to science through constant aspirations in expanding boundaries of technology." More than 68 years after pioneering

this industry in Japan, Takachiho will continue to develop, manufacture, and sell specialty gases including pure atmospheric and rare gases, calibration standards, multi-component mixtures, semiconductor gases, high purity hydrocarbons, and fluorocarbons. Takachiho will continue its research and development efforts to create new products and services for the future through constant innovation and every changing evolution of the current market position.

Egami's secret to longevity was his passion and purpose towards life. Every day he kept asking himself how he could make Takachiho a better company and develop something new. Even at the age of 103, he went into work 2-3 times per week. He never stopped learning.

Surviving World War II and his near-death experience in the Sumatra Jungle of Indonesia further hardened his determination to live life to the fullest. He believed that, "At any age, we must not be content to sit down by the fireside and simply look on. Life is meant to be lived. Curiosity must be kept alive. One must never, ever for whatever reason, turn their back on life."

Masashi is survived by his wife, Kaoru Egami, Executive Managing Director of Takachiho, daughters Maki Egami, President of Takachiho and Miki Egami, Managing Director of Takachiho.

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