

A Non-Endoscopic View of Eiji Yanagisawa, M.D. - Our Mentor

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Our amazing mentor, Eiji Yanagisawa, was an olympic caliber gymnast as a young man. Because of an injury sustained in gymnastic competition, Eiji's future turned to a career in medicine. He eventually trained as an otolaryngologist at Yale University School of Medicine under Dr. John Kirchner. Eiji was destined to become probably the most outstanding and well-known otolaryngologist trained at this institution.

Eiji remained in New Haven in private practice but became an important influence in the training of Yale ENT residents for over 50 years.

Our association with Eiji (Dr. Christmas) started in the 1960s when Dr. Christmas was fortunate enough to have Eiji as his most important teacher. It was standard procedure for Eiji and his residents to document every case seen and every operation performed by utilizing 35mm slides or 16mm movies. In the 1960s, Eiji was a prominent otologist of the highest caliber and he was able to bring the best, i.e. Hal Schuknecht and Jim Sheehy, to Yale to teach. Working as a resident with Eiji, always involved long days and unending nights with a very patient instructor who had a great desire to teach and an intense desire to photodocument everything.

In 1975, Eiji coupled a home Magnavox video recorder with a flexible fiberoptic scope to perform fiberoptic video laryngoscopy (Fig1- A). A presentation of "Photography and Videotaping of Microsurgery of the Larynx" was made at the 1977 AAOHNS annual meeting and Eiji's photo documentation career was off to the races.

Because of a friendship formed in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, Eiji was instrumental in bringing Dr. Heinz Stammberger to Yale in 1984 to present one of the first courses on FESS in the USA. The 1990's converted Eiji to a true rhinologist with the introduction of PESS. He participated in a number of powered sinus dissection and AAOHNS instruction courses organized by Dr. Joe Mirante (Fig1-B).

Dr. Yanagisawa has published approximately 375 original articles, 79 book chapters, and four otolaryngology books (Fig1- C). He has produced over 75 movies and instructional video tapes. He has made over 200 presentations at ENT meetings.

His most proud accomplishments were probably his intense involvement in the training of over 100 ENT residents in the Yale program and becoming an American citizen (Fig1- D).

The many residents and educators that worked on Eiji's many projects, writings, and videos will remember his favorite workshop, his entire home basement which seemed to store as much information as the National Archives or Library of Congress. Many hours were spent by all to finish projects in that famous basement.

During the 50+ years of Eiji's remarkable teaching accomplishments, there was a "power behind the throne," his remarkable wife, June. She was always at his side to help when needed and encourage him to proceed. June never complained of the intense work, travel, and teaching schedule (Fig2-A).

Dr. Yanagisawa has been editor of the Rhinoscopic Clinic since its inception in 1993 to the present time. We have been fortunate to have been part of his Rhinoscopic Clinic team for many years (Fig2-B).

Eiji Yanagisawa is a true educator, an outstanding otolaryngologist, and a master of ENT photo and video documentation (Fig2-C). Most importantly, he has been "our Mentor and Friend."

Fortunately, gymnastics' loss many years ago (Fig2-D) became otolaryngology's gain !!

"Thank you Eiji!!/You will always be our mentor!" (Fig 3)

Acknowledgment: We wish to thank Linda Zinn for her tireless effort and long standing friendship over the many years we have worked together. Her expertise and true professionalism is the reason that the Rhinoscopic Clinic has been such a success. We wish her good health and a long, happy retirement!!!

Legend

Fig 1-A: Original videolaryngoscopy

Fig 1-B: Instruction course faculty

Fig 1-C: An Atlas of Rhinoscopy

Fig 1-D: Eiji becomes an American Citizen

Fig 2-A: June and Eiji

Fig 2-B: Drs. Christmas, Yanagisawa, and Mirante

Fig 2-C: The master videographer

Fig 2-D: Eiji - The Gymnast

Fig 3: Eiji's Japanese garden