

IN MEMORIAM

Douglas P. Mikell (1951–1993)

David L. Swain

DOUGLAS P. MIKELL DIED January 7 of myocardial infarction during the course of a seminar at Meiji Gakuin on “Christianity in Asia.” His death came suddenly, only minutes before he was to end his presentation before a select group of scholars. He is survived by his wife Blanca Fernandez and daughter Sarah Anne.

The funeral was held Sunday evening, January 10, at Takinogawa Church (Tokyo), where Doug was a “cooperating minister,” with Pastor Ohki Hideo officiating. Subsequent memorial services were held in the United States at Athens, Alabama where he attended university, and in St. Petersburg, Florida, at the Palm Lake Christian Church where he was ordained. His ashes were divided into three parts: one for the Takinogawa Church crypt, one for the JNAC grave in Aoyama Cemetery, Tokyo, and the third for the Garden of Memories Cemetery in Tampa, Florida.

When very young, Doug lived in Tokyo’s Shinanomachi neighborhood when his father served with U.S. Armed Forces in Japan. He and Blanca first came to Japan as missionaries in 1981 as teachers at Hiroshima Jogakuin’s junior and senior high schools and college. Following language study at the Institute of Japanese Studies in Tokyo (1983-85), they served at the National Christian Council of Japan-National Council of Churches USA (NCCJ-NCCCUSA) Christian Community Center in Iwakuni

(1985-87), near Hiroshima, where Doug was director.

Following a two-year Doctor of Ministry program at Bethany Theological Seminary in Oak Brook, Illinois (1988-90), he served as a cooperative missionary in Tokyo District’s North Subdistrict, while based in Honjō Ryokusei Church. From 1992 he was assigned to Seigakuin University’s Research Institute in Ōmiya City, while serving also as cooperating minister of Takinogawa Church.

Doug received his Bachelor of Science in Education (Magna Cum Laude) from Athens College (Alabama) in 1973, and his Master of Divinity in Church History from Lexington Theological Seminary in 1980. At Bethany he concentrated on peace studies, and his Doctor of Ministry research project (1992) provides a Christian critique of Japan’s imperial system.

An avid student of “the things that make for peace,” Doug served as interim editor (1986-1988) of the *Japan Militarism Monitor*, published by NCCJ’s Christian Center for Response to Asian Issues (CCRAI). He served two years (1990-92) as managing editor of the *Japan Christian Quarterly* and participated in the conversion of the latter into the annual *Japan Christian Review*. He was also vice-chair of the Fellowship of Christians in Mission (FCM) Publications Committee, sponsor of the *Japan Christian Review*.

Doug was known for his wry sense of humor. But for him, humor was not a stage on which he played jokes. Rather, he saw life as an arena where ironies and inanities played themselves out; he just looked, listened, and laughed. This came easily to one blessed with an innate humility of the sort St. Paul mentioned: think no more or less highly of yourself than you ought.

Personally I admired most his keen sense of history (he belonged to three professional historical societies). Doug was inquisitive, deliberate, reflective; he wanted his

perceptions to be grounded in reality, and he wanted them connected in honest and balanced coherence. He was willing to wait until reality and coherence made themselves available.

And he honored each specific datum, each particular person, each process and persuasion, with a special pastoral sense of history. It really mattered what the outcome would be. How ironic, how unbearably sad, that his own history among us was cut so short, so soon.