# Obituary for Professor Keiichi Fujita

**A tribute to Keiichi Fujita (1924-2010)**

On July 31, 2010, Dr. Keiichi Fujita died suddenly at home at the age of 85 after he was diagnosed as cancer at the end of May. His death has deprived Japanese and international community of geotechnical engineering of an eminent engineer and distinguish leader. He was a rare breed of academician who integrated the practices of foundation engineering with research and education.

He was born in 1924 and graduated from the Department of Civil Engineering, University of Tokyo in 1946. He embarked on his career as a civil engineer at construction company, Hazama. Because of his high caliber as a man of hardworking with vitality and intellect, he was given an assignment to work in the section of research and exploration of new technologies associated with soil mechanics and foundation engineering. His achievements were highly recognized in the company culminating in 1983 in the position of Executive Director of Hazama in charge of research and exploitation of new technologies.

In 1988, he was conferred professorship at the Tokyo University of Science and move to academic arena as an educator and a researcher. Since then he kept on being affiliated with this university until he completely retired in 2004.

From an early year of his career, Dr. Fujita engaged himself positively in the work of the Japanese Geotechnical Society (JGS) as members of several technical committees discussing practical problems such as pile drivability, ground anchors and deep excavation. His engagement with JGS was not only in the technical areas but also more deeply in voluntary businesses associated with management of the Society as a self-supporting organization. He was instrumental in improving details of clerical works of the Society consisting of about 15 personnel.

In 1983 he was elected to the President of the JGS and served for two years exercising a great deal of his ability as a leader of an organization. Out of 31 presidents ever elected in JGS, Dr. Fujita was one of the two from private industries. It was truly congratulating for all of us to have a leader from private sector having the high capability in the practice of geotechnical engineering.

As well-known, Dr. Fujita was elected to the Chair of TC-28 (now TC204) in ISSMGE on Underground Construction in Soft Ground assisted by Dr. O. Kusakabe which was initiated in 1989 at the time of the 12th International Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. He conceived and spearheaded the organization of the International Symposium on Underground Construction in Soft Ground which was held in 1994 at the time of the 13th ICSMFE in New Delhi. The symposium on the same title was held in London in 1996 under his leadership. He fully exercised an enviable ability as a leader and worked hard consistently by himself to bring the Conferences to fruition. After the chairmanship was passed over to the hands of Professor R. Mair, the modalities and formats were established and the third symposium was held in 1999 in Tokyo. It should be reminded that theme of the underground construction in soft ground were brought about in the limelight of the geotechnical community first by late Professor R.B. Peck in 1969 at the time of the 7th ICSMFE held in Mexico city. However, this subject had been put in the shadow for 20 years under other themes emerging from year after year. It goes without saying that this subject began to be reactivated by the efforts of TC-28 under the leadership of Dr. K. Fujita. It should be remembered that, in the today's development of mega cities in the world, most of infrastructure construction are in progress underground, not above the ground. In view of this, the subject of underground construction will, for sure, be the most promising topics of pivotal importance. For which uttermost emphasis should be placed in the community of the geotechnical engineering.

Dr. Fujita was something of Renaissance man who could excel at regeneration of the subject for which he dedicated his life. He will be remembered for his immense contribution to the development of the underground geotechnics, for his role as a great leader in our society, for his achievements in the technology innovation, and for his consistent dedications as an educator and a mentor to engineers in new generations. We are all thankful that he chose to dedicate his talents and his life to civil engineering and particularly to geotechnical engineering.

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