

In Memoriam: Yuji Ijiri



Yuji Ijiri, former Trueblood University Professor of Accounting and Economics at Carnegie Mellon University, died on January 18, 2017. He was 81.

Renowned for his creativity and engagement with the fundamental aspects and role of accounting in society, Yuji Ijiri was one of the most important accounting scholars of the 20th century. His writings on accounting foundations had a profound impact on accounting research, policy, and practice. His seminal contributions include writings on the axiomatic foundations of accounting and historical cost-based measurements in particular; the introduction of spreadsheet approaches to accounting; stewardship and accountability; audit sampling; the causal basis of double-entry bookkeeping, its matrix representation, and triple-entry bookkeeping (which he invented). Besides accounting, Yuji made important contributions to economics (aggregation theory and theory of firm size distributions with Herbert A. Simon), operations research (goal programming

with William W. Cooper), linear algebra (generalized inverse of incidence matrices), statistics, marketing, and computer science. Of the more than 200 articles and 25 books he authored, he was especially fond of his 1989 AAA monograph *Momentum Accounting and Triple-Entry Bookkeeping*. He is the only four-time winner of the AICPA/AAA Notable Contributions to Accounting Literature Award: 1966 (“Reliability and Objectivity of Accounting Measurements” with R. K. Jaedicke), 1967 (“The Foundation of Accounting Measurement”), 1971 (“A Model for Integrating Sampling Objectives in Auditing” with R. S. Kaplan), and 1976 (“Theory of Accounting Measurement”).

Yuji served the AAA in many roles, including as vice president and later as president in 1982–1983. He received the AAA’s Outstanding Educator Award in 1986 and was inducted into Ohio State’s Accounting Hall of Fame in 1989.

Born on February 24, 1935, in Kobe, Japan, Yuji loved the abacus school he went to at age six. He was evacuated to a Temple in Okayama during the war at age nine and studied algebra then. At 14, his father, Takejiro Ijiri, put Yuji in charge of the family bakery’s account books. Yuji passed the CPA exam in 1953 while attending Doshisha Junior College at night. He finished three years at Ritsumeikan University with a bachelor of law degree, completing all requirements for a CPA certificate at age 21, the youngest ever in Japan.

At Doshisha, Professor Taminosuke Nishimura was a great influence on Yuji. Nishimura asked his students to read Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus (Tailor Retailored)* and draw analogies. It helped Yuji develop a lifelong ability to make deep connections between seemingly disparate ideas—a hallmark of his creativity and thought.

As a CPA, he worked at a small accounting firm and then with Price Waterhouse & Co. before leaving in 1959 to attend graduate school at the University of Minnesota, where he received a master’s degree in 1960 under Professor Carl Nelson. He then studied at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), where he earned a Ph.D. in Industrial Administration in 1963. It was during these years that Yuji obtained Professor Nishimura’s permission to marry his daughter Tomoko (Tomo).

Yuji had close working relationships and friendships with three key figures at CMU: William W. Cooper, who was his mentor, thesis advisor, co-author, and third father figure; Herbert A. Simon, who co-authored the book *Skew Distributions and the Sizes of Business Firms* with Yuji; and Richard M. Cyert, who worked with Yuji on the AICPA’s Committee on the Objectives of Financial Statements (the Trueblood Committee). One of the last papers Yuji wrote was a tribute to Professor Cooper on the occasion of his 95th birthday, summarizing Cooper’s contributions to accounting.

After receiving his Ph.D., he spent four years at the Stanford Graduate School of Business before returning to CMU as a full professor in 1967. He remained a central CMU figure until his retirement in 2011.

“Yuji played an instrumental role in the history of the Tepper School and is considered one of the intellectual giants of his era,” said Robert Dammon, Dean of the Tepper School. Established in 1990, the Yuji Ijiri Award for Excellence in Accounting is awarded to an MBA student each year. Upon the occasion of his retirement in 2011, CMU established the Yuji Ijiri Distinguished Lectures in Accounting.

Yuji loved games, toys, and gadgets. His lunchtime relaxation was often an intense game of Go with a colleague. He shared his latest thinking with his students in introductory classes. His playfulness, ready smile, gentle manner, caring, and generosity with his time earned him the love and loyalty of legions of students and colleagues.

Surviving Yuji are his brother Haruhisa; wife of 54 years Tomoko; two daughters, Lisa and Yumi (both academics); and five grandchildren.