

DANIEL L. OKIMOTO

SCJS '63

Daniel Okimoto was born at the famous Santa Anita Race Track, the largest assembly center for Japanese Americans being dispersed to internment camps throughout the United States during World War II. The year was 1942 -- the Year of the Fiery Horse -- and fittingly, Okimoto was birthed in a converted horse stable. An unusually humble birthplace, the site is nonetheless marked by a signature moment in the historical relationship between Japan and the U.S. That Okimoto -- who later spent most of his life establishing bridges between the two nations -- emerged from this particular locale is, again, fitting.



The son of Christian missionary parents, Okimoto spent the first ten years of his life immersed in Japanese American communities. However, his intellectual exposure to Japan was limited. "The Pacific War, the wartime internment experience, the lingering prejudice against Japanese Americans all had the effect of diluting what should have been a keen childhood interest in the land of my ancestors," Okimoto explains. "It wasn't until I got to Princeton that my freshman advisor strongly urged me to begin to study about Japan. Once I enrolled in introductory classes on Japanese history and Japanese literature, I was hooked. I couldn't learn enough about Japan. Everything about the country -- its history, culture, society, economy, art, literature, religions -- fascinated me."

In 1962, Okimoto transferred to Stanford University for a year to study at IUC (then the Stanford Center for Japanese Studies). There he found the Japanese language instructors "outstanding," and credits them for taking students "farther than we ever expected to able to go." He then graduated from Princeton in 1965 with a BA in History and an MA in East Asian Studies from Harvard, ultimately taking a Ph.D in Political Science from the University of Michigan in 1977. He was then appointed Assistant

Professor in the Political Science Department at Stanford. "I've been there ever since," he says.

As a scholar, Okimoto has focused on the evolving dynamic between the U.S. and Japan, from wartime enemy to economic partner and rival. However, as a result of being at Stanford during "the rise of Silicon Valley as the cradle of entrepreneurship and state-of-the-art technology," Okimoto has also taken the path of "interdisciplinary research and teaching on Information Technology, the Internet, and the intersection of IT and energy." He has served on the Board of several Silicon Valley start-ups, and in senior advisory positions to many

organizations, including a role as Special Policy Advisor to U.S. Ambassador to Japan, John V. Roos, on policy issues related to clean technology.

For his contribution to the promotion of scholarship and academic exchange between Japan and the United States, Okimoto was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, in June 2007. In particular, he was cited as a co-Founder of the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University, a multi-disciplinary research center focusing on public policy in Asia. He was also recognized for founding the Asia Pacific Roundtable (formerly the Japan-U.S. Legislative Leaders Meeting), an annual gathering which promotes and enhances exchange among political figures in Japan, the U.S., and other countries in Asia, in addition to establishing the Asia Pacific Scholarship Program at Stanford University.

Today, Okimoto remains committed to affirming the connection between the two countries. "Through all the transformational changes, U.S.-Japan has remained remarkably strong and stable. Seeking to understand the sources of its resilience has been a most intriguing area of inquiry. I feel fortunate indeed to have been an eyewitness to the complex evolution of U.S.-Japan relations. It is one of the most gripping and compelling chapters in modern history."