

Shigeo Okuma shares with a different culture

by Lin Redmond
News Bureau Editorial Assistant

Shigeo Okuma, a new faculty member at BC, has come from Japan to live in the United States for the first time. He will teach courses concerning Japanese language and culture, and serve as a mentor for Japanese students and interested American students.

Okuma, who is experienced as a teacher and journalist, says with a laugh, "I'm here from Japan, but I'm not here to sell a radio or automobile, or to build estates, but to share with a different language and culture."

Okuma wants to share his own knowledge of Japan, and he would like for his American friends "to sell me all your language skills and culture." He adds, "I make an effort to buy them all -- but without money. That's a main purpose."

Okuma was born in Yamanashi-prefecture, a small town at the foot of the legendary Mt. Fuji. He says several things about Brevard remind him of his hometown -- particularly BC's cornfield. "We grow corn there," he says of Yamanashi. "It is small, surrounded by high mountains." He agrees with many Japanese students that Brevard's landscape and weather are similar to Japan's. As a child he helped with the growing of crops and did India ink paintings of local scenery.

Okuma graduated from Meiji University in Tokyo with a bachelor's degree in arts and literature in 1956. He then worked for high school teachers in English language at the junior high school of Yamanashi, Gakuin University for about one year.

Okuma then worked for 30 years as a journalist in Tokyo with the Japan Times, which he says is the largest English language newspaper in Japan since 1897. He served as a reporter in the social and political departments, then as a member of the managing staff in the advertising and circulation departments.

In addition, Okuma served from 1958 to 1964 as Director of Kasiwa UNESCO Association and advisor to the Youth UNESCO Associations. From 1982 to 1986 he was vice-chairman of the Parents Association for Autistic Children and Adults.

After retiring from the Japan Times this past August, Okuma took a teacher training course with International Internship Programs in Tokyo.

Okuma says he was always attracted to the idea of becoming a teacher. He chose to come to Brevard because, he says, "The kindest people

are here."

He has four children -- three adult sons, and a daughter who is in high school. He reveals his alignment with the ideals of other BC faculty members when he says emphatically, "The Japanese students are just like my sons and daughters."

As for his classes, Okuma says, "My Japanese language course already started -- twice a week, Monday and Thursday, 6:30 to 8:30. Also I wanted to teach art, like Japanese calligraphy and India ink painting. And also to teach "go" games -- it's like chess." Looking to spring, Okuma says, "For next semester I'll make an advanced course, Japanese 102."

To American students interested in going to Japan, Okuma advises to remember that commodity prices are high and education is very expensive there. "But there are many interesting things to study," he says, "high technology, business management. It's different."

Okuma agrees that Japanese people are shy, "Especially women," he says, "but don't hesitate to talk. They are open-minded like people in the U.S." He says, "I talk to everybody in this community. I make an effort to teach everything I know about Japan."

"I'm not a scholar," he continues, stressing his central values of egalitarianism and sharing. "I'm a journalist in Japan and common people don't hesitate to talk to me."



Visiting Japanese teacher and journalist, Shigeo Okuma, relaxes at his home in Brevard. (Clarion photo by Lin Redmond)



Dr. Jeffrey Llewellyn, works with students, left to right, April Whitmire, Nicole File, and Robert Parks.

(Clarion photo by Rachel Moore)

Dr. Llewellyn: 'I'm an educator'

by Sarah Fish
Clarion Assistant Editor

"Everything else up to this point past history. I learn *from* the past but I'm not going to live in the past."

-- Dr. Jeffrey Llewellyn
Sept. '90

These words came from BC's new biology professor, chairman of the Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, researcher and ecologist, as an explanation to his daily motto: Today is the first day of the rest of my life.

Dr. Jeffrey Llewellyn came to Brevard College this summer for many reasons other than the job itself. He came to be chairman of the division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences -- "and that's a whole new thing for me," he says. "Previously I've been a faculty member; I still teach but I have a division to run which has a lot of responsibilities," he says.

Other more personal reasons for his coming here include his love of challenges. "It was new and different. A big challenge, I like challenges," he says.

He also likes the faculty and students. He says, "Man, what a great group of people. Everybody's very nice and real laid-back." The final contributing factor was, he says, "I wanted to go to a quieter, more peaceful, more sane place, where one doesn't have to worry about a lot of the things you have to worry about in a metropolitan area. So it was more or less a package deal."

Dr. Llewellyn received his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Northern Iowa, ("in my hometown, Cedar Falls, Iowa," he says) and his doctorate at the University of Nevada in Reno. He completed in 10 years, the standard amount of time for a PhD in the sciences, and declared his major his junior year. He says, "I'd always kind of liked biology." Now he says, "I don't have any regrets. I like biology, I like teaching, I like all the things I'm doing."

Although he spent last year teaching in Miami at Florida Memorial College, a four year liberal arts, he spent most of his career at the College of Basic Studies of Boston University.

"The reason I left Boston University -- I felt like I had reached a dead end. I did the same thing day after day for years and years and I just decided I wasn't going to continue with it anymore," he says.

"As you go through life things change and what was a great thing one day may not be a great thing down the road."

He adds, "The important thing is to be happy in this lifetime and when you get to that point where it's no longer a good situation, don't be afraid to change it, get out of it, go forward. Too many people don't do that."

While at BU, he was in the two year College of Basic Studies. BU consists of 15 colleges and schools. People sometimes start with the two-year program and then transfer within the University. "So, working in the two year liberal arts program wasn't something I hadn't been doing," he says. "One thing I like about teaching... I like working with students because students are still free and open and willing to try an experiment".

Dr. Llewellyn already has a good impression of Brevard's students. He mentioned his religious background as being Presbyterian, a close relation to the Methodist church. "I've always felt that the Methodists and Presbyterians were good decent people -- so I thought that about the students at BC and that's been confirmed ever since I've been here," he says, "I think the students here at the College are a good group -- I have a great ol' time with them."

Dr. Llewellyn, says of himself simply, "I'm an educator, that's what I am. I just happen to like to teach along with doing research and put it all together to try to educate people about the environment, ecology, biology, life in general, etc. etc. etc. I'm an educator."