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Science, Technology and Movies

Dr. Miki featured in this issue cites the movie "Fantastic Voyage" as a source of inspiration for his research work.

Released in 1966, the story of this American movie is that a team of medical specialists, on board a microscopically scaled-down submersible, is sent into the interior of the body of a VIP who suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. This film won acclaim because it reproduced the fantastic interior of the body back in those days when CG was not invented yet.

When it comes to science and technology-oriented films, you may instantly associate them with SF movies like "Avatar" and "Fantastic Voyage." In Japan, there are many people who were inspired by the animation "Astro Boy" and became robotics research scientists.

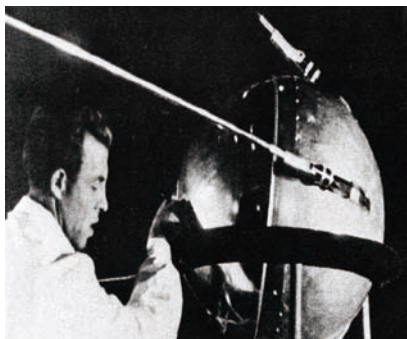
Putting SF films and comics aside, a number of serious scientific movies focused on actual scientists and engineers have also been produced in the United States, stimulating the younger generation.

An example of an old-time movie is "Arrowsmith" (1932) directed by John Ford, which featured a medical scientist dedicated to research. The late Keio University Prof. Emeritus Itaru Watanabe, the pioneer of molecular biology in Japan, once said in retrospect that as a young student he had been greatly influenced by this movie and set his mind on learning medicine.

"Tucker" (1988) is a story about an engineer who strove to create a new-concept car with an innovative mechanism in the 1940s but failed in his attempt due to obstruction by the Big Three. The fact that this somber movie was created by prominent figures like G. Lucas (executive producer) and F. F. Coppola (director) reflects Americans' deep-rooted enthusiasm toward automobiles and technology.

In the movie "October Sky" (1999), the hero is an actual NASA engineer. The story: four high school boys in the countryside, stimulated by mankind's first artificial satellite "Sputnik" put into orbit by the Soviet Union, aim to create their own rocket.

While Japan advocates science and technology as the foundation of the nation, we regret that there are very few movies focusing on actual scientists and engineers as heroes or heroines. Is there anyone who will volunteer to produce a film or video, featuring our Keio research scientists, for delivery to the world?



Sputnik #1, the world's first artificial satellite
(from NASA/Asif A. Siddiqi)

Editor's postscript

This issue, No. 3, featured Dr. Norihisa Miki who was born in March. I visited his lab assuming that all the lab members must be neat and scrupulous because they engage in micro/nano level research work. To my surprise, a conic hat for Christmas was still there as late as mid-January! Seeing this smile-provoking sight, I imagined them busy preparing for their graduation theses.

Dr. Miki is a cheerful person who likes to entertain people, often joking and purposely derailing his talk to other topics. Though he accepted our interview rather peacefully from beginning to end, he suddenly became upset when asked to pose for a photo and revealed shyness by shouting for help "Someone, say something funny!" By the way, I asked students who were delightfully talking with him, "What type of person is Dr. Miki?" They suddenly became shy and slow to speak out. I wondered that people thinking of things in common and spending lots of time in the same environment might resemble each other in character.

Three issues of this publication have been published in rapid succession. Now it is time for us to pause for a while. We will see you again in the new school year around the time of fresh green leaves when we will start to hear cheerful voices of freshmen.

(Saori Taira)

Science and Technology Information

Keio Leading-edge Laboratory of Science and Technology (KLL)

<http://www.kll.keio.ac.jp/>

KLL was established in April 2000 as a liaison unit to promote and support industrial/administrative/academic collaboration endeavors at Keio's Faculty and Graduate School of Science and Technology.

It matches needs from businesses with research achievements of Keio researchers. In addition, KLL offers opportunities of exchange by holding the annual KEIO TECHNO-MALL exhibition held in December and industry-academia collaboration seminars held three times a year.

The 19th Keio University Faculty of Science and Technology Extension Course for Citizens

"See the quantum, the universe, and the color of the world"

Date: June 19 (Sat.), 2010 Afternoon (specifics undecided)

Place: Fujiwara Hiroshi Memorial Hall, Kyosei-kan Bldg. on Keio Hiyoshi Campus

Admission free; Prior applications required

Held annually since 1992, this extension course will also take place this year, aiming to return Keio's Faculty of Science and Technology research achievements to citizens and local communities, where familiar and timely research achievements are introduced. This year, three researchers will give lectures on: nano-scale quantum; electromagnetic wave technology that allows us to see the world of life and the vast universe; and cosmic ray-based works of art as an attempt to concretely express wonders of nature into artistic forms. Specific information will be uploaded on the Faculty of Science and Technology website in early May.

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