

About “Kenji Okamura Memorial Award for Pioneering the Ocean Frontier”

The Techno-Ocean Network (TON) established the Kenji Okamura Memorial Award for Pioneering the Ocean Frontier in 2010. This award is one of a number of projects conducted in accordance with the wishes of the late Dr. Kenji Okamura with the kind consent of his bereaved family and through the courtesy of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd., the company for which he worked for many years.

With respect to Japanese marine development, the Dr. Okamura laid a strong emphasis on the necessity and importance of pursuing advanced and unified technological development. Dr. Okamura was actively involved in developing equipment and conducting deep-sea research as a Founding Director of the Japan Marine Science and Technology Center (the forerunner organization of the present Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC)). His work was closely linked with the achievement of the national projects to develop the manned deep-sea submergence research vehicles “SHINKAI 2000” and “SHINKAI 6000”. Dr. Okamura also made every effort to raise Japan’s ocean engineering to a level matching that of the United States, which possessed the world’s most advanced ocean technology. He always considered it extremely important that those working in ocean-related fields in Japan had a clear grasp of the technological levels in both the US and in Japan, and to this end he paid consideration to attracting international marine conventions such as OCEANS and ROV International (the present Underwater Intervention), which are held annually in the US, to Japan. This dream was finally realized in 2004, after his death, with the holding of Techno-Ocean/OCEANS 2004, to which the President of the NOAA was invited as a keynote speaker. Furthermore, Dr. Okamura was an acknowledged international expert on diesel engines who developed and perfected a world’s top-class high-speed diesel engine.

In ways such as these, Dr. Okamura continually rose to the challenge of developing new technology, possessed a foresight that rested on a global viewpoint, played an active role in developing Japan as an ocean state, and made numerous contributions to the advance of technical knowledge.

Taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the holding of Techno-Ocean 2010, TON established the Kenji Okamura Memorial Award for Pioneering the Ocean Frontier in commemoration of Dr. Okamura’s services to society and in celebration of his academic achievements. This award is presented to young Japanese researchers and engineers who are judged to be working innovatively in the ocean field in accordance with his wishes.

Kenji Okamura — Profile

Dr. Kenji Okamura was born in Nagaoka City on December 8, 1912. He graduated from the Engineering Department of Tokyo Teikoku University (the present Tokyo University) in 1934 and joined Mitsubishi Aircraft Company in the same year. In 1964, in line with a change of company name, he was transferred to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. After holding important posts such as Technology Management Manager and later Acting Manager at the Head Office Technology & Innovation Headquarters, he served as an advisor to the Technology & Innovation Headquarters until January 1987. From May 1964 he also held several other prominent positions such as Director of Ryonichi Engineering Co., Ltd., Executive Managing Director of Mitsubishi Kaihatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, and President and Director of Ryowa Kaiyo Kaihatsu Kabushiki Kaisha. In 1971, he became the Director of the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC) and subsequently served as an advisor to that organization from 1986. In 1975, he became Chairman of the Engineering Committee on Oceanic Resources (ECOR). In 1951, he was awarded a PhD by the Naval Academy for “the development of a marine high-performance diesel engine.” During his long career, he was also honored with a slew of awards including the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 1955, the First MTS International Award in 1980, the Order of the Sacred Treasure in 1983, and the International Council on Combustion Engines (CIMAC) Gold Medal in 1985. Dr. Okamura died on January 15, 1989.

Award Winner

- 2010 Tatsuhiko FUKUBA
- 2012 Toshihiro MAKI , Sohiko KAMEYAMA
- 2014 Blair THORNTON