

The International Union of Microbiological Societies (IUMS) held its general assembly in Sapporo in September 2011. Twenty-one years since the last assembly in Japan, the Sapporo meeting was the largest to date and featured a special appearance by the Emperor of Japan at the commemorative ceremony on September 10. The Prof.

Jokichi Takamine Research Group made a presentation on Prof. Takamine to open the Jokichi Takamine / Shibasaburo Kitasato Symposium. Here we, as a board member and active supporter of the Research Group, provide a short overview of the group as well a briefing on the contents and format of the symposium.



Taka-Diastase in its original packaging

#### [The Prof. Jokichi Takamine Research Group]

The mission of this nonprofit organization is: to educate society about Jokichi Takamine and the contributions he made in various fields such as encouraging the advancement and industrialization of scientific technology in modern Japan and promoting friendship between Japan and the United States; to teach as many people as possible about this great man; and to develop new human resources and offer hope and purpose to the younger generation who will become leaders of the future. The group continues to study the life of Prof. Takamine by gathering information, publishing a newsletter and holding lectures to convey a proper representation of this great scientist.

#### [Lecture on Prof. Takamine]

Joan W. Bennett, Vice President of the IUMS and member of the research group, presented an extremely interesting talk on Prof. Takamine and his family, using pictures and photos from the Edo and Meiji Periods.

Yutaka Yamamoto, the Director General of the Research Group, described how Prof. Takamine developed enzymes for industrial use and gave specific examples of their application. He also explained that those enzymes are still benefiting humanity today and went on to elaborate on the potential advantages of enzymes to alleviate the worldwide problem of environmental destruction.

He also talked about Prof. Takamine's humanitarian contributions in fields other than science. Of special note are the Shofu-den and the cherry trees in Washington DC.

#### The Shofu-den

The Shofu-den (pine and maple palace), originally constructed as the Japanese pavilion for the 1904 St. Louis World EXPO, was given to Prof. Takamine by the Japanese government and transported to his summer home in upstate New York. With a traditional-style architecture embodying Japanese culture, the Shofu-den has been used for many years as a stage for exchange between Japan and the United States.



The Shofu-den

#### The Washington DC Cherry Trees

Prof. Takamine lobbied the Japanese government to donate 3,000 cherry tree saplings to the United States and this led to the famous row of cherry trees seen along the Potomac River in Washington DC. This is just one memorable example of Prof. Takamine's significant contributions to international friendship and fields beyond science.



The Washington DC cherry trees

Prof. Takamine, who is sometimes called the father of modern biotechnology, showed the world the importance of microbial enzymes to humanity by developing a type of amylase called diastase. Sales of diastase in Japan began in 1899; by sheer coincidence, this was the same year when Amano Enzyme was established. Amano Enzyme is committed to pursuing the unlimited possibilities of enzymes to create new health benefits and contribute to society.