

KOMATSU— A LESSON IN INCHES

By Rob Hudson (PA)

One of my best convention memories came about entirely by chance. I was wandering around the tables at the Monday night reception, taking last-minute photographs of the remaining Convention guests. As I passed the Japanese table, I noticed **Hideo Komatsu**, playing with what looked like an inchworm.

It was an amazing model—it actually “inched” as he moved it. I turned to **June Sakamoto**, who sat nearby. “June, could you ask Komatsu-san if he could teach me that model?” She did, and he agreed. “Rob,” said June, “this is Komatsu’s first time in America, and he may be nervous. He can’t speak much English. I would recommend gracefully dropping out of the ‘class’ if you can’t keep up. Don’t stop to ask for extra help.”

I agreed to the terms, and moved into an empty table. I was soon joined by other curious folders, and before I knew it there were four others at the table, including **Howard Portugal** (PA), **Mark Kennedy** (PA), **Jose Tomas Buitrago** (Columbia) and **Kim Best** (UT). Komatsu didn’t seem in the least bothered by the stragglers.

For the next 45 minutes under Komatsu’s tutelage, we made our way, inch-by-inch, pleat-by-pleat. The model became fairly tricky, with extensive box-pleating into what seemed like hundreds of valley folds. As we groaned at the work, Komatsu looked at us with mock seriousness, and said, “Yes. Very, very hard.” He watched the entire class with the eyes of a hawk. When he saw that someone was falling behind or proceeding in the wrong direction, he quietly snatched the offending student’s model, shook his head “no” and corrected the problem. He was very insistent that we

follow his method of folding — which incidentally, did cut the folding time in half.

With Komatsu’s help, much to my relief, everyone finished the model. Soon, worms were arching and inching their way across the table. Komatsu had the most adept creature, which seemed to dance and move like the real thing. As we sat there, together, enjoying the class, it occurred to me that any language or cultural barriers that may have been present did not hinder understanding in the least. Through origami, we were all able to speak the same “language.” It was an experience I will never forget. ■

Ilena Afonkina in the latest NY fashion, the Ori-bonnet

Photo by Kay Eng



Jan Polish Making opening remarks at Convention '98

Photo by Joseph Wu

Andrew Borloz smiles while tackling a complex model

Photo by Kay Eng

Sergei Afonkin teaching in one of the many paperfolding classes at Convention '98

Photo by Kay Eng

