

His knowledge of the inner workings of the industry, not just in Japan, but also in other parts of Asia, was of great value to our organisation

Mike (Masfumi) Kuritani



Mike first became involved in the wool industry as a young man, when he joined C.Itoh & Co. Ltd., in 1981. He was sent to Australia to further his knowledge and experience in the middle of 1987, and thrown into the wool buying arena without one word of “aussie” language, and little idea of how wool buying happened. Seven years later, he went home to Japan having acquired fluency in the local language, and proficiency in the wool trade.

During those seven years, he worked in all the major markets, Sydney, Melbourne and Fremantle, and made many friends in all sections of the wool family. Making friends has always been easy for Mike, and he

fitted into the relaxed Australian life style as if he had always been part of it.

Consequently, he jumped at the opportunity to return for a second stint in 1999, coinciding with the change in the company name to ITOCHU Wool Ltd., staying this time until the end of 2004. Back in Japan he specialised in the speciality, luxury fibres, vicuna, cashmere, angora etc., and of course superfine wool. Products coming out the other end of the pipeline included Geelong Lambswool sweaters, Tasmanian merino suitings, fine handknitting yarn, and Bluewool suiting, and he was a player in developing stories to go with the marketing of these products.

Mike “drew the short straw”, when he was given the task of planning and organising the itineraries of visiting presidents of ASWGA, and looking after them while they were in Japan . As ITOCHU regularly dealt with most of the ASWGA Japanese members, Mike was always welcome and well known when he accompanied and translated for the presidents at other companies. His knowledge of the inner workings of the industry, not just in Japan, but also in other parts of Asia, was of great value to our organisation. Our gratitude for this is due, not only to Mike, but to the ITOCHU company for allowing him the time to do it. In addition, outside company time, Mike went to great lengths to ensure the comfort and enjoyment of successive presidents during their time in Japan.

Mike has always loved fishing, snorkelling and such outdoor pursuits, and occasionally he fits in a week or so in Australia, during holidays, keeping his skills up to scratch, and catching up with the friends he made here over the years.

July 2011