

A message from Yuki Hokari

My brother, Minoru Hokari, obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, then went on to complete a Ph.D. at the Australian National University. The subject of his research was the history of Indigenous Australians. In June 2003, he began writing a serial column for a local newspaper in Niigata, Japan, entitled "Life-giving Earth: The World of the Aborigines."

In the middle of that project, Minoru was diagnosed with malignant lymphoma, i.e., lymphocytic cancer. With chemotherapy, the cancer went into remission last winter; however, it was such an aggressive cancer that it recurred only two months later, in February. My brother passed away on May 10 in Melbourne; he did not live to see his 33rd birthday.

Now the Australian National University has created a memorial scholarship in Minoru's name. The donations will be collected in a trust fund, and the interest earnings will be awarded annually to postgraduate students from all over the world conducting fieldwork or related research in Australian indigenous history. That is to say, your contributions to the fund will help sustain this scholarship virtually for perpetuity.

Late August will see the publication of Minoru's first book, which he finished just a week before his death. Every time I read over his work, I choke up, asking, "Why did he have to die so young — just 32 years old? Why did it have to be my own beloved brother?" Yet Minoru himself hated more than anything to hear us express such sentiments. "Would it have been alright if it had happened to someone else? Is it OK for others to die of cancer if you don't know them?" he would demand, he who truly despised such selfish thinking.

Throughout the 10 months that he was fighting cancer, Minoru was always calm, positive and courageous. About a week before he passed away, he said in a message to his friends, who numbered in the hundreds:

"Although I know this is selfishness on my part, I cannot begin to tell you how much comfort I take in feeling connected with all of you, my dear friends. So please stay connected with me, whether by remembering me in your prayers, by simply thinking of me, or by mentioning me in conversation — it doesn't matter how. Please do not abandon me to my isolation. Who I am now exists in being connected to you, and that connection is what has supported me all these years and is supporting me now."

Through my brother's illness, our family has come to know many friends and those friendships have endured even beyond his death. We are asking not only those who knew Minoru personally, but also those of you who never did, for help in funding this special scholarship. It is our hope that it will be an opportunity for you to get to know something of Minoru — someone who until the very end longed to be connected to his many, many friends. And we hope that this scholarship will lead to other, new friendships and connections.

"Life is not about how long you live, but about how deeply you live," my brother used to say, and he left this world believing that he had lived a rich, full life. I think of this scholarship fund as a way in which we can add many more years to his full but short life of almost 33 years. I sincerely hope that you will consider making a generous contribution.

With deepest gratitude,

On Minoru's 33rd birthday

Yuki Hokari

From my home in New York

<http://www.hokariminoru.org>