

**A Memorial Service  
Celebrating the Life of  
Robert E. Morrell**



**(January 19, 1930 – May 11, 2016)**

**What we call the beginning is often the end.  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.**

**T. S. Eliot**



# Program

August 22, 2016  
4:00 PM  
East Asian Library

Welcome and Introductory Remarks  
Rebecca Copeland  
Chair, East Asian Languages and Cultures

Memorial Address  
“The Scholarly Legacies of Robert E. Morrell”  
Micah Auerback  
Associate Professor of Japanese Religion  
University of Michigan

Music Interlude

Poetry Interlude  
Marvin Marcus  
Professor, Japanese Literature

Student & Colleague Reflections

Invitation to Share Memories

Reception

## Brief Biography

Professor, Buddhist scholar, musician, loving husband and father, Robert E. Morrell was born Jan. 19, 1930, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. After earning a bachelor's degree in music from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh in 1952, he served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War and, for a time, considered the priesthood. But in 1954 he traveled to Japan, married Sachiko Kaneko, and soon thereafter entered the University of Chicago philosophy program, earning a master's degree in 1959.

Bob continued his studies at Stanford, completing a doctorate in Japanese language and literature in 1968. He joined the faculty of Arts & Sciences at Washington University in 1965 where he taught literature and Buddhism for thirty-four years. He was appointed associate professor in 1972; and full professor in 1987. He was named emeritus professor in 1999.

An authority on Buddhist thought in classical Japanese literature, Morrell was author of *Sand and Pebbles: The Tales of Mujū Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism* (1985), the first complete English rendering of Mujū's "Shasekishū" parables and *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report* (1987), which focused on smaller and frequently overlooked Buddhist sects of the Kamakura period. In 2006, he and Sachiko Morrell — who worked in the university's East Asian

Library for 30 years — co-authored *Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes: Japan's Tōkeiji Convent Since 1285*. The book traces the history of Tōkeiji, the famous Rinzai Zen convent, from its founding, through the Edo and Meiji periods, to the present day.

Bob also co-authored, with Earl Miner and Hiroko Odagiri, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* (1985); and, with J. Thomas Rimer, *The Guide to Japanese Poetry* (1975/84). He wrote numerous journal articles and book chapters, contributing to the classroom staple *Sources of Japanese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600* (2001), as well as *Religions of Japan in Practice* (1999) and *Great thinkers of the Eastern World* (1995), among others.

Perhaps Bob's most profound contributions and lasting legacy came in the classroom, where he nurtured and inspired several generations of Asian scholars, many of whom have submitted brief remembrances of their time with Bob.

Bob died May 11, 2016, in St. Louis after a brief illness. Sachiko was by his side. He was 86. Robert Morrell is survived by his wife, Sachiko Morrell, and their daughter, Audrey Morrell.

(From the official university obituary authored by Liam Otten.)

# Four Quartets

## T.S. Eliot

An excerpt

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.

From **BURNT NORTON** (No. 1 of 'Four Quartets', Part I,  
by T. S. Eliot)

## Memorial Address

Dr. Micah Auerback is Associate Professor of Japanese Religion in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He earned his PhD from Princeton University in 2007 and his MA from the same institution in 2001. But what is even more significant to us, Dr. Auerback earned his BA from this institution in 1996 with majors in both Philosophy and Japanese. While here he completed a senior honors thesis on the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese philosopher Tominaga Nakamoto under the tutelage of Robert Morrell. Micah was the last undergraduate to write a thesis with Bob. Now himself a professor with students to mentor, Micah's research interests range from the seventeenth century to the modern period, and include military and prison chaplaincy by Japanese Buddhists; modern Buddhist notions of engagement with state and society; Tenrikyō and other Japanese New Religions within Japanese colonialism. He is also interested in images of the historical Buddha in Japan and his monograph *A Storied Sage: Canon and Creation in the Making of a Japanese Buddha* (forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press), analyzes changing Japanese narratives of the Buddha Śākyamuni, from the Edo period to the postwar years.



## Remembrances

I first encountered Robert Morrell through his work on Mujû Ichien when I was an undergraduate student at Oxford. I was struck by the fact that I felt equally fascinated by this eccentric medieval monk, and I knew immediately that I would want to work with a person with whom I had this peculiar karmic connection! So in 1978 after graduating, I applied to only one university, Washington University, St. Louis, to undertake a Master's degree. My intuition had been right and I was well rewarded. Bob turned out to be a rigorous teacher, a generous mentor, and with time, together with Sachiko san, a warm friend.

I learnt a great deal from Bob and it has stayed with me over these long years. Most importantly, he taught me the importance of taking Buddhism seriously. In a field where even today the secular and religious are treated as if they were two distinct domains, Bob worked against the grain, arguing for their inter-relatedness, and maintaining that there was no way of understanding the world of medieval Japan without engaging knowledgeably with Buddhist philosophical concepts and practices. Equally significantly, he showed me how academic work required integrity and commitment, extending well beyond the narrow confines of an increasingly professionalised academy.

Although we were separated by continents, over the years we continued to have many interesting conversations via email. Bob was unfailingly critical and generous in equal measure when called upon to comment on my work. If I have one regret it is that Bob, Sachiko san and I never managed to do a *busseki meguri* (pilgrimage of Buddhist sites) in India that we so often talked about.

Bob will be missed terribly not only by his family and friends but by all his former students. However, speaking for myself, I take comfort in the fact that the lessons he taught me are alive and well, and continue to guide me to this day.

Dr. Rajyashree Pandey  
MA, Japanese, 1980  
Reader, Asian Studies, University of London

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While at Washington University for my A.M. in Asian Studies (1990 to 1992), I had the opportunity to take Professor Morrell's course on Asian Buddhism which was an amazing class. I'll always remember him starting class with the "moon in the water" metaphor and asking the class which was real, the moon in the sky or the moon in the water. Now when I teach the first half of my Asian Civilization classes, I still crib from the notes I took in his class to teach the spread of Buddhism in Asia. It was a challenging class, and one that had nothing to do with my research specifically, but I'm still

glad I had the chance to take the class and study with Dr. Morrell.

Jeff E. Long, PhD  
MA, Asian Studies, 1992  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

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I was a student of Bob Morrell in the early 1990s (in the religious studies graduate program) and was fortunate enough also to be invited into Bob's and Sachiko's social circle thereafter, having dinners and lunches with them regularly during subsequent years. In short, Bob Morrell made a very deep, permanent impression on my life, and not just with regard to the many varieties of Buddhist thought and values – both the tangible and, more importantly, the intangible. In addition, he dragged me into the computer age (during the DOS days!), shared with me his vast knowledge of music history and poetry, and graced me with his loyalty and friendship until his death this past spring. I sat at Bob's feet for almost a quarter of a century, and I am forever in his debt.

Randall R. Scott  
MA, Religious Studies, 1994  
Audio/Visual Producer-Emeritus, Obata Design, St. Louis

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Dr. Morrell was always ready with sage advice before, during, and long after my time at Washington University. “Don’t stay in Japan too long,” he’d said, and, “First get your ‘union card,’ then research what you want.” Of course, being young and foolish, I did not always take his very sound advice.

Bob, your guidance is sorely missed, and my feelings are summed up in this poem by our friend Genshin, which you, of course, know very, very well. The translation is yours, but today the sentiment is also mine.

玉かけし衣のうらをかへしてぞをろかなりける心をば  
しる

Finally I realize  
The extent of my stupidity  
Returning to inspect  
The lining of my garment  
Where He has hidden a jewel.

Bishop Genshin

Mike Dankert  
MA, East Asian Studies, 1994  
Licensed Customs Broker  
Columbus, Ohio

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Bob Morrell, or Morrell sensei as I addressed him, was a hero of mine, and I don’t think he knew it. I first encountered Bob after returning from Japan during my

graduate work at Wash U. I had struggled with some late-Meiji, early-Taisho legal reports while doing fieldwork and thought a bit of classical Japanese would help me. I signed up for the basic classical Japanese course taught by Bob—a bit aloof as a law student who had a strong command of modern Japanese and not much interest in Japanese literature, religion or philosophy.

Within a semester, however, Bob's pure enthusiasm and love for the classics seduced me into becoming a disciple.

Our initial course was composed of half undergraduate Japanese majors filling in requirements and half graduate students in a variety of disciplines taking the course for purely instrumental reasons. There were no classical devotees; this was service teaching.

Like millions of students before us both in Japanese middle schools and graduate schools across the world, we began with *Kaguya hime* (竹取物語, 10<sup>th</sup> C). By the end of the book, I was hooked on the Sudoku like challenge of classical Japanese but also the poetry of translation from this sparse older vernacular.

Bob guided me there. He showed me the basic rules, but much more importantly he taught me how to play. How to play with words, interpretations, and entendre. That was the hook that got me to take another semester of classical Japanese.

From the second semester with Bob, he began to teach me—quietly and by example, never didactically—about people, lives lived, and humanity. That journey began, always, with the text. The stories became more interesting and the creative translations deeper. I ended up spending another year with Bob in this mode, much of it working on my thesis and translation of five stories from *Konjaku Monogatari* (今昔物語, 9<sup>th</sup> C).

Beyond the text, however, it was what Bob taught me about being a supervisor, mentor, friend, and even father and husband, that matter most and has lasted longest. I'm embarrassed to admit that I doubt I could read a 10<sup>th</sup> Century Japanese text any longer, but I can recall Bob's guidance on being newly married, dealing with university bureaucracy, and simply looking out for others. Again, none of these lessons were didactic (a word Bob loved by the way). Instead they were mostly told by the rambling conversations after class.

Very briefly let me recall two that stay with me. First, one was an on-going conversation about a poster Bob had framed in his office of the notice for US citizens of Japanese descent to move to detention centres during WWII. Why would he chose to frame and include in his sparse office something that cut so close to the bone, as an American from a small conservative town, a US Navy veteran of the Korean War, and husband to a Japanese woman? I'm not sure if I can answer that rhetorical question, but I understood and similarly identified. Second, I recall the conversations we had about religion. He gave me a primer on Buddhism, but I

was always more interested in exploring his own stories about thinking of joining the clergy, like my uncle and grandfather. I cannot say I had the depth of knowledge or erudition to always follow his religious navigations reconciling his interest in Christianity, Buddhism, and Shinto, but he did what the best teachers do. He made me think. He made me clarify my own thoughts, beliefs and arguments. And most importantly, he made me appreciate humanity.

I don't think Bob had any idea how influential he was on me. We stayed in touch but with multiple moves even that fell away. I don't miss Bob, because he remains with me shaping who I am today.

Kent Anderson  
JD/MA, East Asian Studies, 1996  
Professor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Community and  
Engagement)  
University of Western Australia

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I first came to know Prof. Morrell as a Japanese Studies undergraduate at Washington University. I was late to choose the major and had a packed schedule in my final year as I tried to complete all the requirements at once. Amidst all that, Prof. Morrell's classical Japanese texts were the homework most likely to keep me burning the midnight oil, because I knew he would put me on the spot to parse some obscure grammar the next day. He knew how to motivate. His didactic style in Buddhism class epitomized what I hoped to become as I

moved on to the Japanese Literature MA program at Wash U as well.

He was one of the pillars of the department, and he inspired me to continue my studies. Even as I ultimately drifted away from academia I felt his influence; I distinctly remember his “warning” that if I spent too much time in Japan, I would end up never wanting to leave and turn into a “lifer” here. Well, I did and I have. But I like to think he saw it coming, even back then.

Keith Shinabargar  
BA, Physics and Japanese, 1994  
MA, Japanese, 1999  
Supervisory Analyst at SMBC Nikko Securities Inc.,  
Yokohama, Japan

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Robert Morrell, several of whose classes I took and who served as a reader for my dissertation, was a model for me both as a professional and as a human being during my years at Washington University. As superb a teacher and scholar as he was, Robert Morrell was an even finer human being. His clear message to me as a young scholar just embarking on my academic career was to be passionate about my research and to do things the right way—there are no shortcuts to research of real merit. If scholarship is worth being done, he would say, it is worth being done well.

One clear example of Dr. Morrell’s approach to

scholarship came in the Literary Japanese course of his that I took as a graduate student. I had just completed a literary Chinese course with Dr. Hegel, and when it came time to read *kanbun* in Dr. Morrell's class, I felt that I had a decided advantage over the other students. One of the works that we were reading was Tao Qian's classic, "Peach Blossom Spring" that I had just read with Dr. Hegel. Rather than reading the piece as *kanbun*, using the rather cumbersome, roundabout method that Japanese scholars have employed from time immemorial, I thought to read it more directly as a piece of Chinese classical literature. Dr. Morrell would not let me get away with that, and was adamant that I read it as *kanbun* using the conventions and readings of the characters that Japanese scholars use. Only if you read it that way, he asserted, will you be able to understand the literature in the context of Japanese scholarship. Thereafter, in that course and my subsequent career, I have read the *kanbun* and *kanshi* in the linguistically and culturally appropriate ways. I believe that this meticulous and careful approach to my reading of *kanbun* in that course has informed the way that I approached my dissertation and the way that I approach my subsequent research.

On a personal note, I was very interested in Buddhism during my years in St. Louis, and I was fascinated that Dr. Morrell was a practicing Buddhist, which I believe was reflected in his worldview and in his professional demeanor. I have sought to be the same calming presence to my students that he was to his. Incidentally, Bob's wife Sachiko was a great help to me as the Asian Studies librarian at Wash U., and I thought

that they made a wonderful couple. I was newly married at the time, and I remember hoping that Shigeko and I would be as happy down the line as the Morrells seemed to be.

Chris Keaveney  
PhD, Japanese and Comparative Literature, 2000  
Professor of Japanese and  
Chair of the Department Languages, Linfield College  
McMinnville, Oregon



He called me Hôgan-Biiki every time he saw me. [That was the sobriquet given to the great but ill-fated general Yoshitsune and it came to mean “sympathy for the underdog”!]

He would never, ever let me hold the door open to Busch Hall for him after classical literature class...despite the fact that he was overloaded with his big LL Bean satchel full of books. We argued about it just about every M, W, F. But I always let him win.

On the first day of the classical literature class he told all of us that he knew we were busy but that we should always do his homework first. I raised my hand and asked: “If we are in two of your classes, which work should we do first? Do you have a preference?” He was taken aback, but also amused. He paused, then said, “First and second.”

I made a ridiculous mistake in classical literature with a Chinese poem. I split the kanji incorrectly, so all my words were wrong. We had to write our translations on the board. Mine made no sense. He read it and laughed so hard he cried, so did I.

With a twinkle in his eye, he explained to me that T'ang China was not pronounced like the instant breakfast drink. He tried to be a curmudgeon, but it was just an act!

I respected and loved Professor Morrell. He was a wonderful man, and I feel privileged to have been his student.

Eleanor Hogan  
PhD, Japanese and Comparative Literature, 2001  
Associate Professor, East Asian Studies  
Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania



Excerpts from a personal letter I wrote to Dr. Morrell,  
November 6, 2014

... Rather spontaneously as of late, I have also been writing more *zuihitsu* and *tanka*. You must know it is the concept of *mujō*, which you so exhaustively and yet tirelessly instilled in me, that lies behind the content of each form...

... When my children stumble through a translation in their Chinese homework, I have also

repeated to them on multiple occasions—and they will corroborate—your very own words when I confronted mental blocks in my maiden translation of *Kaguyahime*: “What do you *think* should follow? What does *logic* tell you should come next?”... I even smile still when I add a macron (≠ circumflex) over select vowels—remembering you...

... So as you see, this all comes back to you and your contributions to my development: your unflagging, unbiased commitment to individuals, to students, to me; your indulging me in swaths of time; your exercising great patience in spite of my naive, unformed ideas; your fierce encouragement in the face of doubters; your truly world view; and your clever humor all the while...

... Thank you for all that you gave to me face-to-face so many years ago, and in the ensuing years as your words have continued to inform my thoughts.

Claire Cuccio  
MA, Japanese, 1996  
PhD, Stanford University, 2005



I first met Professor Morrell at a dinner party. Not knowing I was sitting opposite an authority of Buddhism, I, very confidently, questioned some of his opinions on Zen. That was how we started arguing and continued arguing until I left St. Louis six years later. I enjoyed our disputes immensely because I learned more from arguing with him than from agreeing with any

other professor. He tolerated my endless challenges and questions because he quickly realized that my passion for art and literature was not as cultivated as his but no less sincere. Prof. Morrell was the embodiment of the ideal humanities scholar: he had a penetrating mind, enormous erudition, and exquisite taste in art. His wife and co-author, Sachiko, is a Japanese fairy, sent to the Western hemisphere to demonstrate how gentle kindness and ability to create beauty look in human form. Visiting their house for dinner or tea was always an exceptional experience combining music, a table set as a work of art, delicious food, fascinating conversation, and cordial hospitality. And, of course, numerous heated discussions about politics, postmodernism, or other abominations.

I taught a course on Chinese religions at the University College. Before giving the lecture on *shunyata* (emptiness), I was seized by something very similar to a panic attack. I called the Morrells and described my confusion and fear. They immediately invited me to their house where Sachiko was expecting me with wonderful Japanese tea and cookies and Professor Morrell gave me the best lecture on basic Buddhist concepts I had ever heard. Why fear emptiness with friends like these?

Rumyana Cholakova (Rumi)  
PhD, Chinese and Comparative Literature, 2009  
Lecturer, Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski,” Bulgaria



I am very pleased to have an opportunity to make a few comments about my friendship with my colleague Bob Morrell, whose example, and whose personal generosity, meant a great deal to me during my many years of teaching Japanese literature at Washington University.

When I first arrived at the University in 1971, I was fresh out of graduate school, and although I had been working for some time in the Foreign Service, I was altogether new to the challenges and idiosyncrasies of university life. Bob, who was already an established scholar, was an unerringly kind and thoughtful guide, and he and Sachiko did so much to make us feel at home.

While our intellectual interests were somewhat different (my specialties have been modern Japanese literature and theater), I quickly found myself admiring Bob's intellectual rigor, kindness with his students, and his dedication to the larger issues facing the development of his field of Buddhist studies. In many real ways, although Bob may not have been aware of it, he was to remain an important role model for me.

As might be expected, Bob was careful and thorough in his research, and he produced a body of important work that has been and will continue to be of great use both to specialists of Japanese Buddhism as well as to readers and scholars interested in a variety of elements in Japanese culture that his research helps to illuminate.

When, in particular, I think of the contributions Bob made available to his more general readers, including myself, I think at once of his remarkably cogent and useful contributions on the Buddhist tradition included in Earl Miner's *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*, first published in 1985. In studying these essays, the reader senses at once Bob's commitment to the integrity of his material, balanced with his conviction that the significance and spirituality of these historical and literary texts can be conveyed with clarity and enthusiasm to English-language readers. Here, Bob's generosity of spirit is apparent on every page of his contributions. I can't imagine a greater legacy, and one for which I, for one, am profoundly grateful.

Thomas Rimer  
Professor of Japanese Literature, 1971-1983  
Department Chair, 1978-1983



I first met Dr. Morrell in 1973 when I joined the department (then known as Chinese and Japanese) as a secretary.

A very special remembrance for me was one beautiful spring day in April 2015. Dr. Morrell walked to campus from his home to visit me at the office. We talked about many things, but what remains precious to me is the fact that he wanted to spend time and visit with me. I so enjoyed our trip down memory lane together... remembering past faculty and students... and

his thoughts about computers. He was the guru of the Department when it came to computers, but that day I was surprised when during his visit he said that he didn't know why he had been in such a hurry to have us (the secretaries) learn how to use computers. He said it didn't seem so important anymore.

My favorite saying, which I use quite often, is one I learned from Dr. Morrell: "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him put on a bathing suit."

Debra Jones  
Administrative Officer



Bob Morrell's devotion to his wife and daughter also nurtured a wonderful warmth for Audrey's friends, including my fortunate family. Having known Audrey since just after college, we moved to St. Louis when she was already living in Tokyo. Bob maintained a gracious, welcoming interest in us ever since, always ready to indulge our stories or to engage weightier topics. He never intimidated with his extensive knowledge, but just wanted to share it, as he and his conversation partners worked toward solutions or just explored world views. Among many things he showed us the pleasure that can be had into old age while healthy enough to enjoy people. We are so grateful for his friendship. We send love and best wishes to Sachiko and Audrey.

Jim and Liza Hitchcock-Hayashi  
Family friends



“One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. ‘Which road do I take?’ she asked. ‘Where do you want to go?’ was his response. ‘I don’t know,’ Alice answered. ‘Then,’ said the cat, ‘it doesn’t matter.’”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

## THE HŌJŌKI

Ceaselessly the river slows, and yet the water is never the same, while in the still pools the shifting foam gathers and is gone, never staying for a moment. Even so is man and his habitation.

In the stately ways of our shining Capital the dwellings of high and low raise their roofs in rivalry as in the beginning, but few indeed there are that have stood for many generations. This year falling into decay and the next built up again, how often does the mansion of one age turn into the cottages of the next. And so, too, are they who live in them. The streets of the city are thronged as of old, but of the many people we meet there how very few are those that we knew in our youth. Dead in the morning and born at night, so man goes on forever, un-enduring as the foam on the water.

And this man that is born and dies, who know whence he came and whither he goes? And who knows also why with so much labour he builds his house, or how such things can give him pleasure? Like the dew on the morning glory are man and his house, who knows which will survive the other? The dew may fall and the flower remain, but only to wither in the morning sun, or the dew may stay on the withered flower, but it will not see another evening.

(Excerpt from *The Ten Foot Square Hut and Tales of the Heike*, transl. by A. L. Sadler, pp. 1-2)

*Empty handed I entered the world.  
Barefoot I leave it.  
My coming, my going-  
Two simple happenings  
That got entangled.*

– Kozan (d. 1360)

(Trans. Y. Hoffmann)



As he wished, Bob's ashes will rest at Jyurinji Soto Zen Temple (Shizuoka, Japan).

Here, he will have a clear view of Mt. Fuji.