

Ezra Vogel: 1930 – 2020

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Ezra Vogel, the world's foremost scholar of Asian studies, died on December 20 of complications during an operation. Ezra was a robust 90 years old and was actively corresponding with friends and colleagues up to the day of his death. This sudden, unanticipated loss of a scholar and close friend was a sad way to end a challenging year.

The tasks of a university professor can include teaching, research, administration, institution building, fund raising and public service. Most professors have strengths in a few of these areas, but Ezra, uniquely, excelled in all of them, while, at the same time, sparing generous amounts of time for family, colleagues and friends.

Ezra retired from his professorship at Harvard University in 2000, but for him, retirement was a way to free up time to tackle larger projects, including two major research projects, one on Deng Xiaoping and the other a history of the 2000-year relationship between China and Japan. He was an indefatigable traveler with access to leaders in the United States and nearly all countries in Asia, and after he retired, he increased his travel to Asia to attend conferences and meet with leaders, students and friends to exchange opinions and concerns about Asian affairs. For the project on Deng Xiaoping, he spent a total of 14 months in China, spread over five years, conducting extensive interviews. He also travelled to Singapore, Australia and Japan to interview people who knew Deng.

His reputation as a leading scholar gave him a unique pulpit which he used judiciously and to good effect. On his last trip to Japan in November 2019, he packed 1000 seat lecture halls in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka, speaking, in Japanese, about his concerns regarding the often rocky relations between Japan and China.

There was nothing in Ezra's early life to portend his eventual rise to prominence as an Asian scholar. He grew up in Delaware, Ohio, a small town about 20 miles from the

state capital of Columbus. His parents, Joe and Edith Vogel, were immigrants from Eastern Europe, and the Vogels were among the few Jewish families in this typical Protestant Midwestern town. His father operated The People's Store in the center of town, where Ezra often helped out after school. The family was well integrated into the community through membership in civic groups and boy scouts and Ezra even participated in retreats with friends from Protestant church groups. As an undergraduate he attended Ohio Wesleyan University, a local Methodist liberal arts college. He belonged to a fraternity, majored in sociology, and then after graduation he was drafted into the army during the Korean war. He kept in touch with his high school and college friends throughout his life, and the target readers for his non-scholarly books were his classmates from Ohio, whom he considered to be typical, educated, middle Americans who knew little about Asia. Even after his parents died, Ezra visited Delaware frequently, often to visit Wesleyan, where he funded an annual lecture series, and he also made a generous contribution to the university from the proceeds of his biography on Deng Xiaoping.

In the 1970s, Honda Motors chose a site about twenty minutes from Ezra's hometown to establish what has become one of the largest Japanese automobile factories in the United States. So, while there was no Japanese presence in rural Ohio when Ezra was growing up, the fact that a Japanese company is now one of the largest local employers helps to make Ezra's work more relevant to people in his hometown.

Although Ezra rose to academic prominence, he never strayed far from his provincial roots in Ohio. I think that Ezra did not cultivate his Jewish identity until he came to Harvard.

All of us who studied with Ezra are particularly grateful for his warm, friendly and caring attitude toward students. From the time he was a lecturer in the mid-1960s, he and his wife Suzanne opened their home on Parker Street every Wednesday to students.

In the 1960s, we were a small group, mainly working on Japan. There was nothing fancy about these gatherings. Over crackers and cheese and a jug of wine from

Marinetti's Liquor store in Cambridge, we would discuss our work or any topic which was relevant to our interests in Asia. Harvard can be an intimidating place, and these evenings at the Vogel's gave us an opportunity to discuss our work in an informal, comfortable setting.

At the same time, this was Harvard, and the students in the group, as well as the stream of former students and colleagues passing through, made these evenings at the Vogels' special. Pat Steinhoff, for example, who now teaches at University of Hawaii, gave a report on her interview in an Israeli jail of one of the Japanese terrorists who opened fire at the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv in 1972. Fox Butterfield, a former student who was a journalist at the New York Times, dropped in to discuss his expose of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. Takeo Doi, a renowned Japanese psychoanalyst from Japan, discussed his concept of "*amae*" or the theory of dependency in the Japanese personality. Marian Levy, Ezra's flamboyant classmate from graduate school who was teaching at Princeton, stayed at the Vogels frequently with two exotic dogs and entertained us with clever aphorisms like: "In unanimity there is uncritical thinking," or "To know thyself is the ultimate form of aggression."

In later years, Ezra moved from the Parker Street House to Sumner Road, one block away from the three Asia-related centers — Fairbank Center, Reischauer Center and Asia Center. He and his second wife, Charlotte Ikels, an anthropologist specializing in China, now had an even larger room, with a capacity for about thirty students. And the stream of interesting guests continued, such as Andy Nathan and Perry Link, who edited and published the massive Tiananmen Papers, documenting the decision to send troops to quell riots in Beijing in 1989. Or Kevin Rudd, the former Australian diplomat and prime minister who had thorough recall of stories about senior Chinese officials. Where else but Ezra's and Charlotte's can you find yourself chugging beer with a former prime minister who calls you "mate"?

Ezra maintained an open, friendly home throughout his career. When I was his teaching assistant for his class in Japanese society in the 1960s, we met once a week at his home

to discuss plans for the class. Ezra fixed the lunch — his specialty was bacon and tomato sandwiches.

Ezra's concern for students came out again in September 2020 when the Trump administration started restricting visas and putting pressure on universities to stop the flow of students coming from China. It reminded historians of the time the government put Japanese students in jail in Boston after Pearl Harbor, forcing professors to travel across town to hear the seniors defend graduate theses in their jail cell. Ezra, who is one person at Harvard known by name to all Chinese students, met with the members of the Chinese student association to make sure the students knew that important people at Harvard were concerned about them. This is an excerpt from those remarks:

“Who knows what the future will bring and what you will experience in your careers, but it looks like the United States and China will be rivals for many years. We need to find ways to build bridges that reduce the hostility between our two countries. Some of you, who are here today, after completing your studies at Harvard, will remain in the United States. Some of you will return to China. Whether you stay here or return to China you will have a deep understanding of China and the United States. At a time when our countries have difficulties in getting along, many of you can play important roles as bridge builders who keep our relations healthy. Some super-patriots in both our two countries may criticize you, but as one who considers himself a bridge builder and who enjoys many Chinese friends, I believe your role as bridge builder will be very important in avoiding conflict and promoting our common interests. The world will benefit from those of you who build and maintain those bridges.”

In about 2000, Ezra started a regular gathering at his home on Sumner Road for students from Japan studying not only at Harvard but at universities around the greater Boston area. He called this his “juku” or study group, and the practice grew out of his concern that young Japanese, after the collapse of the Japan economic bubble, had lost their sense of mission and lacked a vision. This group also maintained a network

after they returned to Japan, and they would get together with Ezra in Tokyo on his trips.

Many of Ezra's students ended up living in Japan, and since the 1980s, he held an annual reunion in Tokyo attended by about 50 people. The last reunion was held in November 2019.

### Early China Scholarship

Ezra's scholarship on Asia began with his study of the family life of postwar Japan, published in 1963 as *Japan's New Middle Class*. This project came after his Ph.D. thesis, when one of his advisors, Florence Kluckhohn, felt that Ezra was too provincial and needed experience overseas in order to gain a more cosmopolitan perspective and a better understanding of the United States. He thought about Africa or South America, but because he and Suzanne already had a child, they decided that Japan would be safer. They spent a year learning Japanese and meeting Japanese scholars, and then they spent an additional year living in a suburban neighborhood conducting intensive interviews with six families.

This was a well-executed study using orthodox field work methodology. Ezra and Suzanne managed to attain a level of confidence and friendship with these families which is unusual for Japan. Suzanne spent time with each of the wives each week, observing and discussing family finances, spending habits, child rearing, marital disputes. Ezra interviewed the husbands and also spent time working with Japanese sociologists such as Tominaga Ken'ichi, Fukutake Tadashi and Kawashima Takeyoshi. Thereafter, for the next fifty years, Ezra visited the families at least once a year on his trips to Japan. Suzanne also visited the families regularly. After she and Ezra divorced, she continued the visits, and at the time of her death in 2012 she published a book about the wives entitled: *Japan's Changing Family: 50 Years of Professional Housewives*.

*Japan's New Middle Class* launched Ezra's academic career, which at this point was as a sociologist with interest in Japan. It did not necessarily make him an Asian scholar. He

got a position as assistant professor in the psychology department at Yale and he could have continued with a career in sociology, which would have been a rational decision for a young scholar with a family.

The projects which placed his career on the path of a serious Asian scholar came later with the early China related books, *Canton Under Communism* (1969) which won the annual Harvard Press faculty book award and was one of the first comprehensive studies by a scholar of the early years of communist rule, and a follow-up on the reforms of the communist system, *One Step Ahead in China* (1989). In addition, he wrote a number of scholarly articles for journals and co-edited books such as *Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen* (1990) and *Living with China* (1997). This large body of work qualified Ezra as an Asian scholar who sometimes used the theoretical tools from sociology.

The China projects were the result of a life changing decision Ezra made under the persuasive guidance of John Pelzel, an anthropologist at Harvard who worked on both Japan and China and later became the chairman of the Yenching Institute. Pelzel convinced Ezra that he should come back to Harvard and continue his work on Asia, but he also convinced him that to get tenure he would need to work on China. Pelzel helped arrange a post-doctoral stipend to allow him to come back to the university and study Chinese. Then, in 1964, Ezra was able to get a lectureship in the sociology department where he taught two courses, one on Japanese society and one on Chinese society. This was about the time that I first met Ezra and joined his group of students interested in Japan. Shortly after we started working with him and enjoying the Wednesday study sessions, he abandoned us for two years and went to Hong Kong to do the field work for what became *Canton Under Communism*.

I witnessed Ezra, with amazement and disbelief when he was making these decisions.

For the normal young scholar, particularly one from a family of modest means, the decision to return to Harvard, return to the modest stipend of a post-doc, all for the purpose of mastering Chinese and embarking on the study of a country you cannot even visit, was high risk. In watching Ezra work, one trait which stands out is his

incredible self-discipline. In his decision to return to Harvard in the 1960s to study China, or his decision later in life to tackle massive projects like Deng Xiaoping, he seemed to have a good grasp of the size of the task (plus or minus a couple of years), and, perhaps more important, he had the confidence that he could make the sacrifices and adjust his time to pull it off. Ezra was a model in self-discipline.

In addition, there was another set of institutional forces which probably made this choice appealing. Ezra's primary institutional affiliation at Harvard as a graduate student had been the Department of Social Relations, an ambitious interdisciplinary experiment which included sociology, social psychology and social anthropology. The department was the fiefdom of the renowned theorist, Talcott Parsons, who had considerable impact on Ezra. This is also the department of Clyde and Florence Kluckhohn who were the faculty members who had convinced Ezra to go overseas. Founded in the 1940s, in 1965, this department was coming unraveled, and, eventually, sociology seceded as a separate department, which is where Ezra got his appointment as a lecturer and, later, a professor. In 1965 Harvard built a 15-story skyscraper called William James Hall to house the Department of Social Relations, and as is often true, this new headquarters actually was the beginning of the end of the department. George Homans, who became the chair of the Sociology Department, called William James Hall a "Shinto Gothic" monstrosity (it was designed by the Japanese-American architect Minoru Yamazaki, who also designed the World Trade Center in Manhattan). Homans wrote in his autobiography that the many floors, dreary corridors and notoriously slow elevators tended to divide rather than unite the faculty. But more than the building, the interdisciplinary approach in the department was dependent on Parson's highly theoretical book, *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Parson was near retirement, and Homans, an opponent of Parson's approach, was ready to abandon the *General Theory*, and, as he put it, make sociology more relevant and understandable.

The Yenching Library, one of the best East Asia collections in the Western world, is right behind William James Hall. And two blocks from William James, at 1737 Cambridge Street, John Fairbank had managed to get funding to pull together a group of scholars in an old hotel which was called the East Asia Research Center (EARC). This is where

John Fairbank, Ben Schwartz, Ed Reischauer (after returning to Harvard from his Ambassadorial post in Japan), Roy Hoffheinz, Jim Thomson et al had their makeshift offices, in renovated hotel rooms which offered the added convenience of old-fashioned footed bathtubs which could be used to store books and papers. Ezra took an office at 1737 Cambridge Street, and, because he never used his office in William James, turned that space over to his graduate students. As Homans noted, the elevators were slow and the halls were dreary, but it was a convenient place to write a Ph.D. thesis with Yenching Library nearby.

I suspect that Ezra was attracted to the sense of community and mission at the East Asian Research Center. It was an opportunity to work with an outstanding group of colleagues, all of whom were pioneers in an area of the world which could only become increasingly important. John Fairbank, the great institution builder in Asian studies, turned 60 in 1967 and must have seen promise in Ezra as somebody who could develop the next generation. After Fairbank's retirement, the center was renamed the Fairbank Center, and Ezra succeeded Fairbank as the second director, a position he held from 1973 to 1975.

Although Ezra was on the path to become an Asian scholar, it is important to understand his roots in sociology, or "social relations." Ezra always maintained that Talcott Parsons had a strong influence on his work, particularly his drive to look at the "big picture." *Canton Under Communism* had roots in the Department of Social Relations, even though the department was disintegrating when Ezra began the project. There were models for Ezra to follow, such as the book by Raymond Bauer, Clyde Kluckhohn and Alex Inkeles, *How the Soviet System Works: Cultural, Psychological, and Social Themes*. And in the preface to *Canton Under Communism* Ezra notes that Merle Fainsod's book, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* was one of his models.

In the preface to Ezra's last book, *Facing History*, he re-states his intellectual roots this way: "My interest in using a broad sociological framework to analyze the history of national societies dates back to my graduate student days before I became an Asian specialist, when I benefited from the teaching of Parsons and from discussions among

friends in our circle of graduate students around him, including Bob Bellah, Cliff Geertz, Chuck Tilly, ...”

When I was a graduate student in sociology, Talcott Parsons organized a final “post-retirement” seminar. Ezra discouraged me from taking it, because he thought Parsons had gone too far into abstract theory in his final years. He advised instead that I take courses from George Homans and Daniel Bell, who came to Harvard in 1970. Ezra was fortunate that in the 1950s, when he was a graduate student, the mission of the department was to use theory to tackle massive projects like the Soviet Union and the reconstitution of Europe after World War II.

Ezra always fought to have area studies represented in the disciplines such as economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology at Harvard. I think his point was that theory should be in the service of understanding the “area”, rather than the “area” in the service of proving theory.

I witnessed one clash between Ezra and some of the inhabitants of William James Hall at a symposium after the publication of *Canton Under Communism*. Two authors were on the agenda, Ezra and Barrington Moore, who had just published a major work entitled *The Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Moore’s book offered a theory of why some societies in the course of modernization evolve into fascism, with Germany and Japan as examples, while other societies, such as Britain and the United States, evolve into democracies, and other societies, such as the Soviet Union and China, evolve into communist states. This was grand theory at its grandest. In contrast to Moore’s wide and rather shallow approach, the narrower goal of *Canton Under Communism* was to get the best understanding possible of how the party took over and ruled Canton in the first two decades after 1949.

The political atmosphere at Harvard at the time was chaotic, due to the never-ending Vietnam war and the bombing of Cambodia and Laos. The Social Relations Department not only had a super majority of left leaning students, but a group of students had broken off and formed their own set of courses, “free” from faculty supervision. Many students had a romantic view of Mao, China and the cultural revolution. Perhaps for

that reason, the more radical students favored Moore, and, in the old tradition of Harvard, they hissed Ezra. In the Q&A period, one graduate student remarked that Moore's work was "real sociology" while Ezra's was journalism (Ezra trained many top journalists over the years, so he may not have taken this as an insult).

To add to the chaotic mix, William Hinton, the author of *Fanshen*, a book about an early PRC commune, was in the crowd and he criticized Ezra for not understanding the true intentions of Mao in the cultural revolution.

The symposium was chaired by George Homans who, annoyed by the hissing students, took the privilege of the chair to compliment Ezra by saying that *Canton Under Communism* proves that sociologists can do useful work. He also made a comment that Barrington Moore's theory would offer fodder for counter arguments by generations of students to come.

Clifford Geertz, the anthropologist noted for his work on Indonesia and other Moslem countries, was visiting and made a constructive comment complimenting Ezra for his use of theory as a tool, rather than the product of the study. One example he gave was the way Ezra pointed out the differences in the historical and cultural context of the communist regime in Russia and China. In turn, he thought that Moore was trying too hard to find similarities in order to support his theoretical framework. From his own work, Geertz said that he began a project comparing Indonesia and Morocco expecting to find commonalities due to Islam, but found the differences to be more interesting and significant.

As a final observation, it has been 50 years since these two books were published. Ezra's book has stood the test of time, even though, as he noted in the book, later studies, including those of Ezra himself, may change some of his conclusions when scholars are finally able to get access to China.

On the other hand, Moore's book has been debunked by a number of scholars, including Ronald Dore, whose work on land reform in Japan was used (Dore would later say misused) by Moore for his chapter on Japan. In the best Dore style, he began a

review of Moore's book by noting that any scholar who longs to spend years in the British Museum or Widener Library would read Moore with envy. He granted that the three chapters on theory were well written and compelling, while he advised the reader to skip the six chapters on history, because Moore had the "rather serious defect as a historian of getting it wrong." And then the ultimate sound-bite, which is Dore at his best: "The plain fact is that you can't make sociological omelets without breaking a few historical eggs – not omelets that are half-way palatable, at least." Touché!

Ezra's approach was to keep the "historical eggs" and throw out the sociological omelet, when appropriate. As Steven Vogel said, "Vogel's scholarship was not restricted to any single methodology, but rather reflected his drive to get the story right through whatever means necessary."

### Japan and Number One

As Ezra's career as an Asian scholar moved forward, he wrote several books on Japan which, chronologically, were interspersed with his books on China. To me, the series of China books are fundamentally different than those on Japan. The China books build on one another, similar to the way China itself was transforming decade by decade. Ezra's massive work *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* is a fitting crescendo to this series. All of these books, including the one on Deng, can be seen as a "Parsonian" sociologist's analysis of historical events, including extensive interviews and attempts to get a three-dimensional view of the structure and function of the evolving PRC.

The books on Japan are different, and in writing them, Ezra's mission was different. It is almost like there were two Ezras, and every few years the Japan version of Ezra would emerge to write a book on Japan. In these books, Ezra is heavily driven by his worries about the United States. He was trying to encourage an American audience to look at Japan as an industrialized nation which had solved the problems of modernity differently, and in some ways better, than the United States. The China Ezra was more empirical, while at the same time he was amazed at China's transformation. The Japan

Ezra became more normative, because of his concern about problems in the United States.

The most famous example in this genre is *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (1979). The origin of this book was a study Ezra was making of Japanese business and government leaders in the 1970s. In the course of the study, he became increasingly concerned about political, social and economic problems in the United States such as double-digit unemployment, racial tensions, crime, the problems American companies had in competing with Japan and the aftermath of the Vietnam war. The US-Japan relationship was tense because of the trade imbalance, and politicians were “bashing Japan” both figuratively and in one case literally, by taking sledgehammers to Japanese consumer products on the steps of congress. The mission of this book was to get Americans to see how they could learn from Japan rather than bashing Japan with angry rhetoric. The headline of one of Ezra’s op-ed pieces in the New York Times at the time was that Japan is America’s competitor, not America’s enemy. To signify his passion, he dedicated the book to his children, with the comment: “To David, Steven and Eva – may they live in a better America.”

As is well known, the book sold reasonably well in the United States (about 50,000 copies) and set an all-time publishing record in Japan. The original printing in Japan was 20,000 copies, which sold immediately. The publisher then printed 200,000 copies, which also sold quickly. In the end, the book sold over 500,000 copies, and Ezra gained a celebrity status in Japan which lasted for the rest of his life. The day after his death, 1, all of the major newspapers in Japan posted front-page obituaries with similar headlines: “Ezra Vogel, author of *Japan as Number One*, Dies.”

In 2009, when we celebrated Ezra’s 80th birthday at the International House in Tokyo, Nakasone Yasuhiro, prime minister from 1982 to 1987 gave the keynote address. With his tongue only partly in his cheek, he said that his success in the 1980s as prime minister is attributed to Ezra’s book. He said that for the first time in Japanese history, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan included the Japanese prime minister as one of

the “three” pillars of the “free world”. He said this may not have happened without Ezra.

Several of Ezra’s colleagues have confessed to me that they advised him not to publish the book, or, to use a pseudonym because it would damage his reputation as a serious scholar. Ed Reischauer gave him the sage advice to make the book mandatory reading in the United States, and prohibit the sale in Japan. The book received mostly negative reviews in the English-speaking academic community. The *Journal of Japanese Studies* in their summer edition in 1980, devoted 20 pages to reviews from various scholars, all negative.

The book had a strong reception outside of the United States and Japan in countries such as China, Singapore and Vietnam. Jiang Zemin read the book, as did Li Kwan Yew. On a JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) training mission to India, I found that many Indian Entrepreneurs had read it. I think leaders from developing countries were realistic in the lessons they took from the book. Few of them thought that they could or should transform Singapore or Vietnam or India to be like Japan. But many of them thought they could learn some things from Japan, such as a better way to manage a hospital or a subway line, find a better system for policing residential neighborhoods, and certainly how to improve the quality of manufactured goods.

Many, even in Japan, remembered the book more as a phenomenon than for what it said. It gave Ezra a level of celebrity which he used to an advantage, and those of us close to him made occasional use of it as well. Ezra sometimes referred to his “celebrity tax,” because his reputation was indelibly linked to “*Number One*,” but in total, I think it was more of a blessing than a burden. My secretary assumed the task of arranging Ezra’s Japan schedules for the last 15 years, and she was always amazed at how his name opened doors to prime ministers, cabinet ministers, noted scholars, or members of the imperial household. In 2014, she was trying to get an appointment with Prime Minister Abe, mainly because Ezra wanted to discuss Abe’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine the previous December, which had a negative impact in China and the US. The Prime Minister’s Office told her Abe was travelling, so they suggested an appointment with

the Chief Cabinet Secretary, Suga instead. Suga spent two hours explaining to Ezra the issues in the China relationship, and at the same time described the various “back channels” which were in operation to maintain communication.

In 1985, Ezra published another book on Japan entitled *Comeback*, which was a study of how Japan and the United States revived some sectors of the economy which fell in decline. For example, he looked at the development of the “research triangle” in North Carolina and compared it with the recovery of the island of Kyushu after the devastation of WWII and the decline of the local coal industry. In both cases, the projects were successful and required a combination of government planning, the involvement of research universities and initiative by private business. The book was still in a “normative” vein, but the comparisons were more balanced than *Number One*. Unfortunately, the book was not widely read.

One follow-up which I do not believe has ever been written is the positive impact Japanese competition had on many American companies. *Number One* was one of a series of books which came out about this time to sound the alarm of a decline in American manufacturing. Many companies rose to this challenge, often by learning directly from Japan. In the George H.W. Bush administration, the Commerce Department introduced the Baldrige Award for quality control, which was based on the quality systems that had evolved in Japan. America did learn from Japan in some areas, and it still could learn in other areas such as health care and public transportation.

#### *From Washington to Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*

From 1993 to 1995, Ezra took leave from Harvard for an appointment in Washington as the National Intelligence Officer for East Asia. I visited him in Washington several times, and he also sent me drafts of some of his reports for feed-back. In hindsight, it was the right job at the right time. Alone in Washington, he lived like a mendicant monk, but Ezra always lived modestly, so his living situation did not bother him at all. He was able to solidify his relationships with both policy makers and the Washington think tanks. Most important, he came away with an interesting view of what policy makers need

from academics, and one of his conclusions is they do not need more information, they need very concise information. He came to appreciate the challenge of writing the “one pager” and he saw the need to train students on being brief and concise. He began to talk about the need for a “go-between” function between academia and the government. In some cases, he thought think tanks could play that role, but he also felt that many think tanks in Washington have a political agenda which could constrain free expression. He encouraged students to think about taking entry level positions or positions on congressional staff to gain experience in this “go-between” function. After he returned to Harvard, he continued making frequent trips to Washington, and he was able to play a more meaningful role as a “public intellectual.”

When Ezra started the Deng project in about 2000, he knew that it would require at least ten years and also require him to do extensive library research, something he had never done before at such a scale. He was already 70. His marriage to Charlotte was a blessing for many reasons, among them, she taught him how to keep himself in shape. I remember going to Logan Airport in 1970 to see Ezra and the family off for a trip to Japan. He was overworked and suffering from heart palpitations and insomnia. Ezra was 40 and was becoming a victim of his own excessive drive. In contrast, 30 years later in 2000, he was in better shape than in 1970. After their marriage, Charlotte and Ezra jogged for about 20 years, and then later he switched to cycling and swimming out of consideration for his leg joints.

Ezra approached the Deng project in the way he did all of his projects, but in this case the scale was larger than anything he had tackled before.

First, a note on language. The obituaries all point out that Ezra was fluent in both Japanese and Chinese. As all of us who are non-native speakers know, “fluent” is a relative term. Ezra graded himself as a B+ language student, which to him meant that he was not as good as he wanted to be. From the time I first met him in 1967, he always worked with language tutors. In the case of the Deng project, he took regular language lessons with a Chinese tutor, using the material on the project for his lessons. Over years of studying Japanese and Chinese, he acquired an admirable ability to write

characters from memory. This was helpful on a project like Deng, because he interviewed many Japanese who knew Deng. Japanese usually use the Japanese reading of characters for names and proper nouns. Ezra communicated with them by writing the characters, which is similar to the way Japanese and Chinese often communicate with each other. Ezra could also take notes in Chinese and Japanese. Even the great translators, like Donald Keene and Edward Seidensticker, did not have the ability to write characters from memory at Ezra's level.

For the interview portion of the project, he made extensive notes from the interviews and then typed them up. In his early projects in the 1960s and 1970s, he made Dictaphone recordings of interviews and had an assistant write out the transcript. For Deng, he wrote out the transcripts himself. When in Cambridge, he had a small team of assistants with whom he met regularly. He would also ask them to write short summaries of their research. Over the course of time, he developed a massive amount of written, hard copy material. He would then start making very rough drafts of chapters. The first draft was often embarrassingly rough. He would go through the re-writing process until he got a draft that he could send out to colleagues for comment. He made extensive use of colleagues, many of whom would give back detailed comments and corrections.

Ezra had an amazing talent to pull a story out of a chaotic mass of data. Somehow, he did not get lost in the detail. Or, if he did, he found a way out. His standard comment to Ph.D. students was to get the drafts out quickly and make the data tell your story.

Not only was Deng the first time for him to do extensive library research, but it was also the first time for him to write a biography. In East Asian history, it is common to structure a Ph.D. thesis around a biography, but this was not the approach in the Social Relations Department. As a biography, many reviewers criticized the book for not calling Deng to task for his role in Tiananmen, his role in the Great Leap Forward, or the demise of Liu Shaoqi. Ezra responded to these criticisms, but probably did not convince the critics. One defense, which is compelling in my mind, is that Ezra wanted his readers to understand the scale and importance of the transformation which occurred.

The transformation went far beyond correcting the brutal excesses of Mao. In Deng's time, China became a global power for the first time in Chinese history.

I received word of Ezra's death at my home in Tokyo at about 5:30 AM on December 21 from Merry White, a close friend and graduate school colleague who now teaches at Boston University. Then the word started coming in from others, including Ezra's son, David. None of us were prepared.

Obviously, he was not immortal, but we all assumed he had time to finish his next two or three projects. I assumed he was starting the rough drafts of the book on Hu Yaobang.

After Deng Xiaoping, he completed the 600 page *Facing History*. He said he was slowing down, but in our mind, slowing down for Ezra means going at a more normal pace.