

Masayoshi Nagata (1927–2008) and his mathematics

Masayoshi Miyanishi

Masayoshi Nagata, professor emeritus of Kyoto University, died of cancer in Kyoto on August 27, 2008, at the age of 81 years. He was born in the city of Ohbu near Nagoya and graduated from Nagoya Imperial University in 1950. He was a student of Tadasi Nakayama and published his first research articles in *Nagoya Mathematical Journal* while he was an undergraduate student. He became a research assistant in the Faculty of Science of Nagoya University the same year he graduated. In 1953, he moved to Kyoto University as an instructor. Many young people talented in algebra and algebraic geometry gathered together around Yasuo Akizuki. Nagata became an associate professor of Kyoto University in 1957 and was promoted to professor in 1963, succeeding Yasuo Akizuki as Chair of Algebra. He held this professorship at Kyoto University until his retirement in 1990.

The mathematical influence of Masayoshi Nagata is enormous not only through his research works but also through his contributions to the domestic and international mathematical communities. He played a quite active role in the mathematical community in Japan by serving as trustee of the Mathematical Society of Japan and as a member of the Science Council of Japan. At the International Mathematical Union, he served as a member of the Executive Committee between 1975 and 1978 and as vice president from 1979 to 1982. He was awarded the Chunichi Cultural Prize in 1961, the Matsunaga Prize in 1970, and the Japan Academy Prize in 1986. The Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold and Silver Star, was conferred on him in November 1998.

Nagata was an outstanding mathematician, exceptionally talented in looking into the intrinsic nature of problems and expressing his insights through counterexamples. He was nicknamed “Mr. Counterexample” in admiration. He was a good teacher as well and wrote many textbooks including the introductory ones listed at the end of this article. Let us now trace his mathematical achievements in commutative algebras and algebraic geometry.