The 13th Congress of the Asian Pacific Association for Laser Medicine & Surgery (APALMS) was held in Suwa City, Nagano Prefecture. A congress has been held every two years since Prof. Kazuhiko Atsumi (a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo) hosted the 1st Congress in Tokyo in 1985, and this was the first time it had been held in Japan for 25 years. Two years ago, the congress was held in Seoul alongside the South Korean Domestic Congress, and the 13th host nation was decided at that Annual General Meeting. However, for various reasons, the nominated country was unable to act as host, which meant that only one year before the event the decision was made that I should host the congress as president. Preparation time was short, and this was to be an APALMS-only event, so there was unease over how much international and domestic participation there would be. Fortunately, the Laser Tokyo 2009 conference was held 11 months before the date we had decided on, and we invited as many foreign and Japanese friends as possible who had attended Laser Tokyo 2009. We also had the opportunity to promote Suwa at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Japan Laser Therapy Association. As we proceeded with the preparations, it became clear that the October date of the congress fell during the Japanese conference season, and that clashes with other conferences would make it almost impossible for dermatologists, orthopedic surgeons and laser device manufacturers to attend.

First we scheduled 8 topics for special lectures and invited the following lecturers to speak: from abroad, Prof. Isaac Kaplan (Israel), Prof. Ming-Chen Kao (Taiwan), and Prof. Narong Nimsakul (Thailand), and from Japan, Prof. Kazuhiko Atsumi, Prof. Toshio Ohshiro, Prof. Harubumi Kato, Prof. Masayoshi Okada, and Prof. Kunio Awazu. All accepted readily, getting preparations off to a smooth start. With the support of Prof. Harubumi Kato, we were able to arrange speakers on surgery, neurosurgery, and breast surgery from Tokyo Medical University, my own alma mater, and speakers on various subjects who were recommended by Prof. Akiyoshi Saito of the Nihon University Hospital Orthopaedic Surgery Department. In the field of dentistry, Prof. Kenji Yoshida’s introductions allowed us to schedule a symposium by dental surgeons from various countries. Finally, we received abstracts on 62 topics from Japan and abroad, so that, in addition to special lectures, lectures and symposia on 70 topics were scheduled. One of our aims for this congress was to promote Japanese laser treatments, which have reached a high level, to other countries, and with respect to this desire we began to see some response to the congress with around two months to go until the event.

As I was due to attend a lecture series for qualifying under the International Laser Licensing System (ILLiS) prior to APALMS, I was able to meet Prof. Toshio Ohshiro almost every month at the Japan Medical Laser Laboratory in Shinanomachi and discuss preparations in detail.

More than 100 foreign and Japanese delegates and their companions were going to Suwa, and how they might enjoy the city was one important objective. We continued our preparations working for a memorable congress with the help of the staff of this center, and a month before the event we were hard-pressed to respond to all the email inquiries and requests.
Just before the event, several people, including Prof. Isaak Kaplan’s wife, Masha, Prof. Leonard Longo and his wife from Italy, Prof. Toshio Ohshiro’s wife, Prof. Mihai Lucian Pascu and Prof. Adriana Sarah Nica, from Romania, and Prof. Carlo Fornaini, the Italian dental authority, unfortunately had to pull out due to illness or other commitments.

On October 7th (Thursday), an Executive Committee Meeting was held from 16:00 to 17:30 (Figure 1). Chair Persons: Narong Nimsakul and Yoshimi Asagai. The attendees were: Yoshimi Asagai (Japan), Narong Nimsakul (Thailand), Kazuhiko Atsumi (Japan), Harubumi Kato (Japan), Tosho Ohshiro (Japan), Ming-Chien Kao (Taiwan, China), Krishna Rau (India), Sharon Krishna (India), Takafumi Ohshiro (Japan), Loh Hong Sai (Singapore), Fong Poh Him (Singapore), Peter Hasan (Indonesia), Penny Smalley (USA), and Parin Tatsanaivivat (Thailand). The agenda was as follows:
REPORTS

1) Presidential report about the 13th Congress
2) Report of 2nd ILLiS: Prof. Toshio Ohshiro
3) 2012-14th Congress: Prof. Chen-Jen Chang
4) 2015-15th Congress: Prof. Fong Poh Him
5) About the journal: Prof. Toshio Ohshiro
6) APALMS 2010~2012 Executive Committee members
7) Any other business: Lifetime membership was set at $400.

After the meeting, we moved in three buses to Restaurant Palier, the Welcome Reception venue, located on a hill overlooking Lake Suwa, where the reception began with my welcome speech, a few words from Prof. Kazuhiko Atsumi, and a toast proposed by Prof. Toshio Ohshiro. During the reception, participants were introduced in the alphabetical order of their countries, and speeches were requested from one representative from each country. Prof. Kaplan’s arrival had been delayed by plane trouble, but in spite of his rough journey he headed straight out from the hotel to join us and somehow made it in time to give a speech, of course, in rhyme.

On October 8th (Friday), following my opening address, speeches began from 8:00 in the morning. To get things started smoothly, the morning was taken up with lectures from speakers representing Japan, and we were able to promote the high level of Japanese laser treatments to our foreign and Japanese guests.

Following the afternoon’s General Assembly, we took a group photograph of the congress participants (Figure 2). The afternoon program resumed with Prof. Kaplan’s lecture “Peregrinations through the Orient”, and continued with special lectures from speakers representing the world (Figure 3).

From 18:00, the Presidential Banquet began with Prof. Atsumi’s message (Figure 4), followed by an

Message from Prof. Kazuhiko Atsumi

On behalf of the Founding Members of the Asian Pacific Association for Laser Medicine & Surgery, I would like to welcome all of you who have attended this congress, in particular, the foreign guests who have made the long trip from their own countries via Narita or Kansai Airport, then the connecting trains to arrive here.

Kamisuwa is one of the most beautiful and fascinating areas in Japan, both from its wonderful natural environment and one of the origins of precision electronics and the watch industry in Japan. This area is also geographically right at the center of Japan, so I am speaking to you both from my heart, and that of my country! I am especially proud of two things on this occasion.

Firstly, this area is famous in Japan for the longevity of its inhabitants. The average life expectancy for males is 79.84 yr, the top in Japan, and for females it is 86.48, placing this area 5th in Japan, led by Okinawa at first place. I am sure that these excellent life spans are due to the wonderful natural surroundings, pure water, a lot of greenery, sweet air, high education level and good medical facilities with good doctors like Dr. Asagai.

Secondly, I am particularly happy to see this congress organization returning to Japan only for the second time, especially because I was the Founding President when I held the first APALMS Congress in Tokyo in 1985.

As always, under the excellent work of Dr Asagai and his Organizing Committee, we have had a magnificent selection of the state of the art in laser science and medicine, in a large number of specialties, and the scientific program has been really packed full of information. I cannot carry on without mentioning the excellent support Dr Asagai received from his family. As the saying goes, behind every successful man there is an astonished woman, and Mrs Asagai is to be well congratulated for the excellent support she and the younger Asagais have given the meeting. I have heard that the accompanying person’s sightseeing program was first class.

I should like to close by once again sincerely thanking Dr Asagai and his Organizing Committee for pulling this rabbit out of the hat, and in the space of one short year, organizing such an excellent meeting. Thank you.

Fig.3: Prof. Isaak Kaplan and Prof. Harubumi Kato

Fig.4: Message from Prof. Kazuhiko Atsumi
impressive video of Kiotoshi, the sliding of the logs down the hill, and a display of Kiyari, ritual work-songs, by members of the Kiyari Preservation Society. It was attended by over 100 people and continued late into the night overrunning the scheduled time with a karaoke party and dance.

October 9th (Saturday) began from 8:00 with a Hands-on Work Shop by Prof. Toshio Ohshiro where participants could experience the reality of LLLT. From 8:30, speeches continued at two separate locations. In the first location, after the Chairman’s speech on “LLLT for Pediatric Orthopedic and Rehabilitation Patients”, a special lecture was held where Prof. Harubumi Kato talked about the state of PDT and its future potential in a lecture entitled “Recent Progress of PDT in Lung Cancer”. Next, Prof. Kazuhiro Atsumi discussed the history and future prospects of APALMS in his speech “The Great History of APALMS.” At the first location, symposia on applications to infertility treatment, and applications to the fields of dermatology, plastic surgery was held, and at the second location were symposia on the laser treatment of malignant tumors and dentistry.

The program proceeded on schedule, and Closing Remarks were made at 17:15. I then gave my closing speech and passed the APALMS’s flag to the next chairman, Prof. Chen-Jen Chang (Taiwan) (Figure 5).

That evening’s farewell party was held at a Japanese-style inn with guests changing into cotton kimono and speeches from all 50 participants (Figure 6, 7).

Early on the morning of October 10th (Sunday), 21 of us departed on a bus tour to Matsumoto Castle, and after lunch at a miso (soy bean paste) warehouse,
we were shown around Shinano Handicapped Children’s Hospital. At the center, we were able to see how that magnificent institution is addressing the training and therapy of handicapped children through the cooperative work of medical, educational, and welfare agencies, a set-up which is unique to Japan. We were also able to talk to some of the children and get to understand them better (Figure 8).

There were many expressions of thanks from foreign guests, and in particular, Prof. Kaplan sent a message of thanks immediately on the 11th (Figure 9), followed by another from Masha the next day. We also received many words of appreciation from Japanese participants, and were relieved to finish without incident. We were proud of our hosting of the 13th APALMS at Suwa.

APPROPRIATION
Isaac Kaplan

Of the thirteenth meeting of the APALMS, Professor Asagai was the host,
And of outstanding organization and supreme hospitality he can certainly boast.
It was an outstanding meeting, from every point of view,
Scientifically, socially and even the venue.
And so mister editor, I beg of you, to let it know
That the participants, their appreciation wish to show.
I also feel that it will certainly do no harm,
If I mention the Asagai family’s charm.
So, in all, it was an exceptional meeting,
And, one that certainly bears repeating.
Now, those who were privileged a visit to pay
To the institute where Professor Asagai spends his day,
Could not fail to be deeply impressed and moved
By the dedication and devotion that he has proved
To the handicapped children for whom he cares,
And the parents whose sadness and troubles he shares.
He certainly stands out in a crowd,
And the medical profession of him can be proud.
Another hospital like his must be difficult to find
Because it certainly appears to be one of a kind.
Finally, I wish to assure you that,
To Professor Asagai I take of my hat,
And the APALMS can be proud of its new president,
Who happens to be a Suwa resident.

Fig. 9: The Message from Prof. Isaak Kaplan