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DEMING IN JAPAN
1950-1965

From the first seminar in Tokyo to
Toyota's victory at the Deming Prize



BetaCodex Network Associates
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The story of Deming in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s can teach us plenty about management and leadership today

In the series of research papers we started in 2008, this is the 4th volume dedicated to the history of organizational leadership. Our 1st such paper, **Heroes of Leadership**, from 2013, covered the greats of our field, which of course included W. Edwards Deming (1900-1993). The paper has been our most widely read so far. Two other papers on the history of management, published in 2021, traced progressive, contemporary organizational thinking back to Mary P. Follett (1868-1933): The first of the papers identified the **Follettian school of management**, in which Deming has played a preeminent role.

In this paper we pursue a biographical, and photographic approach to BetaCodex thinking for the first time. W. Edwards Deming lends himself to such an approach more than other "Heroes of Leadership", for several reasons. Firstly, his own research and practical work unfolded over the course of 10 decades, with visual material available from all periods of his life – from the 1900s straight to the 1990s. What's more: Deming the management guru impacted organizations in countries as diverse as Japan, the US and elsewhere, as a writer and teacher at many institutions**, but also as a practicing consultant, starting in 1946** (when he left government services) and until his passing in 1993. His work in Japan during the 1950s and 1960s stands out: Deming contributed to the dramatic turnaround of post-war Japanese industry, and their rise to a world economic power. His role as an architect of Japan's post-World War II industrial transformation is regarded by business schools and economists as one of the most significant achievements of the 20th century.

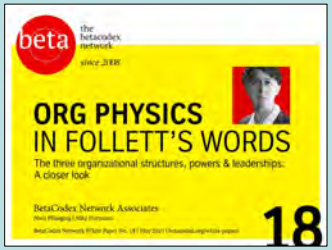
BetaCodex Network research on management history



Heroes of Leadership, No. 14, 2013



The Invention of Managements, No. 17, 2021



Org Physics in Follett's Words, No. 18, 2021

This paper attempts to tell a different history of organizational management and leadership in the 20th century

After WWII, W. Edwards Deming became a pioneer of modern, systemic organizational development, performing teaching and consulting work in war-torn Japan during extended missions to the country, between 1950 and 1965. Here, Deming promoted "statistical control methods for industrial production," and what he would later consolidate into his **System of Profound Knowledge.**

Despite ample recognition of Deming's work in practice, in Japan especially, but also in the US and internationally, there is less recognition of his work in management studies and business school teaching. Here, **Deming's work still does not seem to be considered mainstream thinking**. In part, this may be due to Deming having been being a trained engineer, mathematician and physicist, who earned PhD in mathematical physics at Yale University in 1928 and taught statistics at a university level for almost 5 decades, starting at NYU in 1946 and Columbia University in 1988. Business schools and academics in the field of management studies may still feel intimidated by Deming's alien academic credentials.

Deming's story, more than anything else, is cross-disciplinary. He authored around 200 works – including academic articles, papers and books – in fields as diverse as physics, statistics, medicine and economics. Deming's story is one of possibility and progress, of willingness to learn and to always be consistent, despite his wide-ranging interests. **It is a story of the power of consistent systemic thinking, rigor, principled action and effective use of theory** – instead of dabbling, which Deming used to condemn both vigorously and very entertainingly.



From left to right: Lola Deming, Kenichi Koyanagi (Managing Director of the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers, JUSE) and W. Edwards Deming, 1950s

Hijacking historic black-and-white photos into the world of color – to change our minds about the present and the future



W. Edwards Deming and Lola Deming aboard the Queen Elizabeth, in 1948

Except for three images from the 1980s, all photos in this paper are shown in color for the first time, thanks to A.I-based coloring technology. Most of the photos (except a handful indicated on page 44) are reproduced here courtesy of **The W. Edwards Deming Institute**. I would like to thank Judy Cahill and Kevin Cahill from the Deming Institute for their continued support since my research in 2023 around the **What would Deming do?** book of quotes. The **Deming timeline** from the institute's website has also proven useful to substantiate the research on Deming's work during the 1950s and 1960s.

As you will see on the following pages, the effect of the colored photos is often surprising, especially when **compared to the black-and-white originals**. The quality of the colorized photos is stunning at times: Just consider the photo on this paper's cover, which makes 50-year-old W. Edwards Deming from the year 1950 appear like a man straight from the 21st century.

Current A.I.-based coloring technology is far from perfect, though. I have tried to achieve the best possible results, but I did not attempt to make the details look perfect. Consequently, you will see quite a few people with hands in awkward colors on the following pages. Or hands that seem to fade into the background. You may notice suits that appear to be multi-colored or to have "unlikely" colors. You will see faces that cannot have had that kind of shade. And some objects will seem off, color-wise. Historically, there always has been room for interpretation when b/w photos were turned to color, regardless the method. I believe the results warrant the risks, however. The photos have also been tweaked in other ways to serve this paper's purpose.

A different view of W. Edwards Deming the man, through the lens of the photographer

Most of us think of W. Edwards Deming as an old man. Which is hardly surprising, as Dr. Deming rose to fame in most of the world late in his life, when he was an octogenarian already. His ascent to stardom happened only after the **NBC documentary of 1980** turned him into a public figure. Due to his celebrity status in the 1980s and up to his death in 1993, **video recordings from interviews and from the much-commented 4-day-seminars during that era abound**. In the public mind in the West, at least, this period has shaped our perception of the man whose career spanned seven decades, from the 1920s into the 1990s. In Japan, Deming may be perceived somewhat differently, as the nationally-televised **Deming Prize** ceremonies in the 1950s and 1960 had already turned him into something of a public figure.



W. Edwards Deming (left) aged 15, with his siblings Elizabeth and Robert, The photo was taken in Cody, Wyoming, in 1915

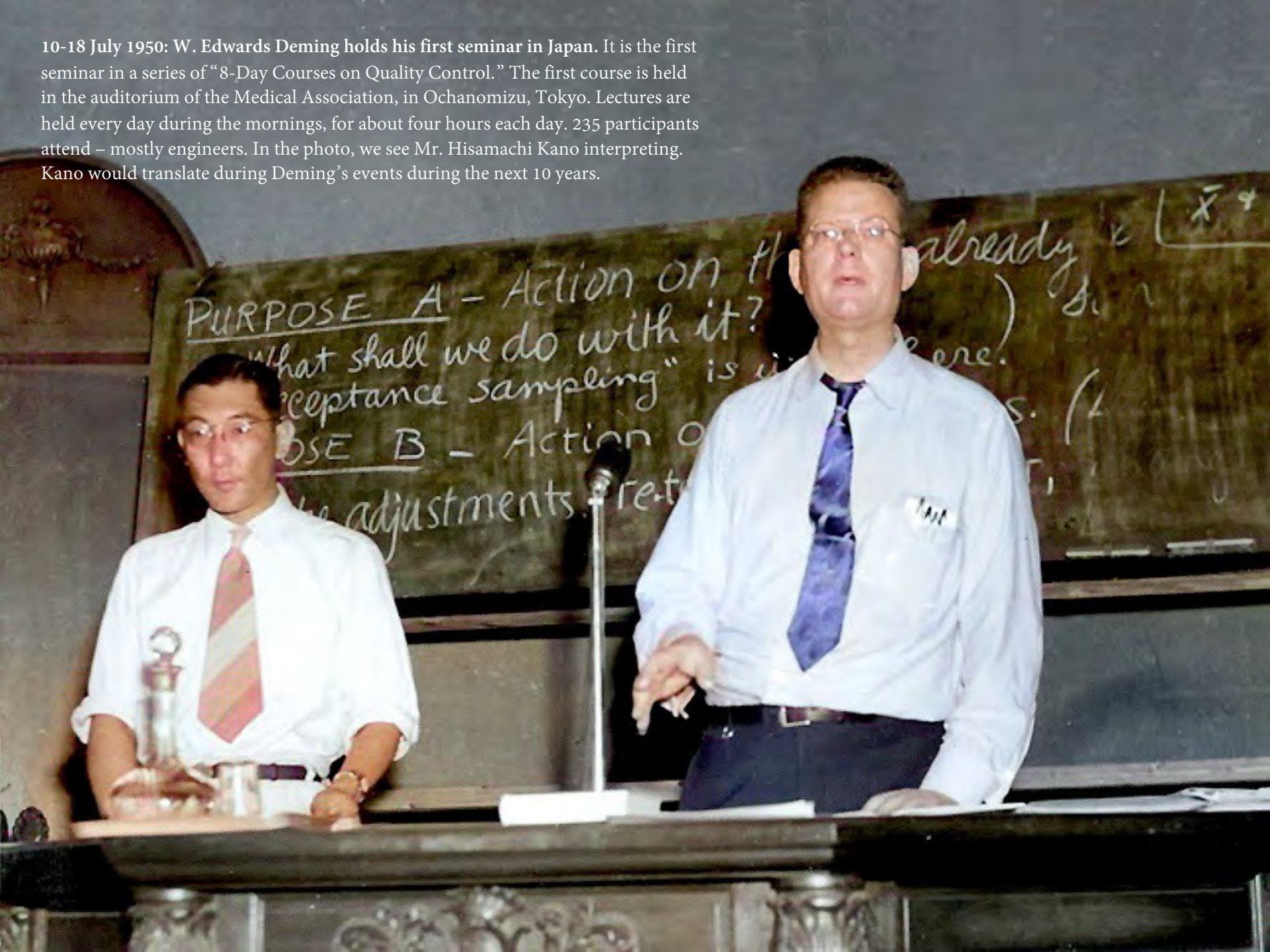
Throughout his life, Dr. Deming worked extremely hard, as many biographers and peers have expressed in detail. It is worth noting that Deming was well traveled, too. By 1950, he had visited England (for a year of studies in London), as well as Canada, Greece, Switzerland, Italy, India, and (naturally) Japan. During the 1950s, Deming also lectured and consulted in Germany, Austria, Turkey and Mexico.

Personally, among the things that I like best about these newly colored photos is that they show **a decidedly *modern* man**. The photos you will see in this paper also show Dr. Deming the practical man: Interacting with locals in Japan, visiting workplaces, travelling by car, train and boat, and being open to rituals and local customs, even dressed in a kimono, at some point.

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Ready to leave. In 1950, Deming is 49 years old. He had visited Japan once, in 1947. Now he receives an invitation to teach the application of statistics to quality improvement: Dr. Eizaburo Nishibori, a member of the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE), and Prof. Sigeiti Moriguti of Tokyo University invite Deming to lecture on statistical methods for business. The session is to be sponsored by the Keidanren, the most prestigious society of Japanese executives, under the leadership of its chairman, Ichiro Ishikawa, who is also president of JUSE. The photo shows W. Edwards Deming in front of Palazzo Jennings Riccioli, Florence, then "Pensione Riccioli," 1948



10-18 July 1950: W. Edwards Deming holds his first seminar in Japan. It is the first seminar in a series of "8-Day Courses on Quality Control." The first course is held in the auditorium of the Medical Association, in Ochanomizu, Tokyo. Lectures are held every day during the mornings, for about four hours each day. 235 participants attend – mostly engineers. In the photo, we see Mr. Hisamachi Kano interpreting. Kano would translate during Deming's events during the next 10 years.



On 22 June, Deming had already held a lecture in Tokyo, with 600 people attending. On the afternoon of 13 July, Deming also delivers a 1-hour talk to 21 presidents of leading Japanese industries. In Deming's words: "I knew that I must reach top management. Otherwise [my work] would just be another flop as it was in the states."



Travelling by car, in Japan, 1950. Deming delivers the same course for JUSE in Osaka (150 attendees), in Nagoya (125) and Hakata (85). This is followed by a one-day course "Quality Control for Top Management," held at Hotel de Yama on Mount Hakone. Hakone turns out to be a breakthrough event, with executives representing large parts of Japan's industrial clout present.



W. Edwards Deming with several generations of a Japanese family, 1950

Touring a field of crops with Japanese executives, 1950





W. Edwards Deming on a boat in Japan, 1950.
During his stay in Japan from June to August 1950, Deming charges no fees for himself. This puts JUSE in a position to use the course fees to firmly establish itself as an association.

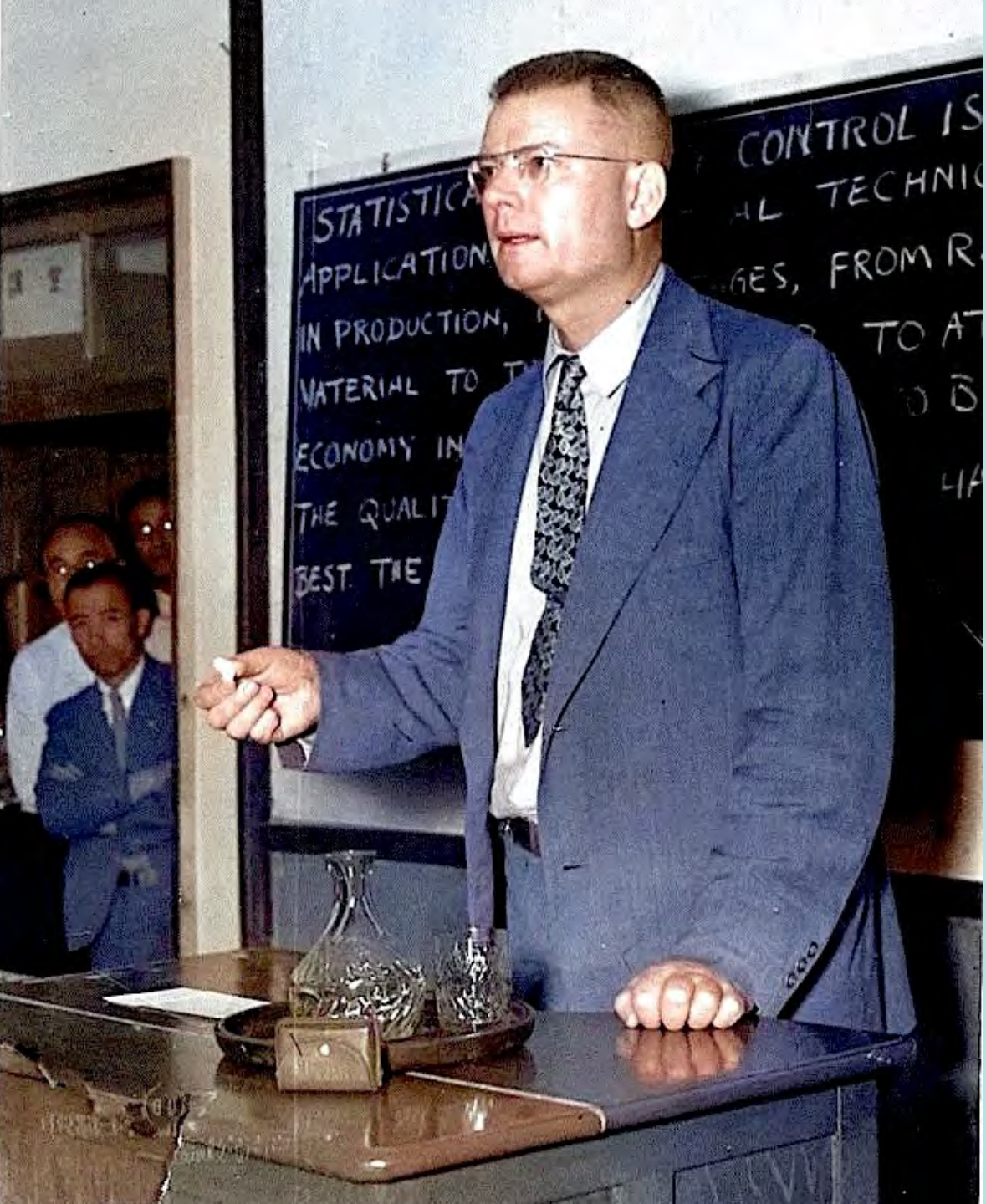
Unlike other Americans on Douglas McArthur's team supporting post-WWII development in Japan, who would keep themselves apart from the local culture, Deming was gracious and curios, immersed himself in Noh plays and complimented his hosts for their mathematical skills. That in turn helped attract leading executives in *keidanren* circles.

Deming talks about more than statistical control and quality: His message combines those concepts with firm views on the emerging global competitive environment and a contemporary business philosophy that values pride of workmanship as well as balancing the interests of *all* stakeholders. Deming's message includes an optimistic vision for Japan's role in the international markets. Later, Deming recounts: "I did the best I could. I gave them encouragement. That was the main thing. I told them that they could produce quality for the consumer, partly industrial, partly household, for the Western world, in return for food. Conditions were such that they would have to do that." Japan's industry, Deming predicts in 1950, would outshine other nations in quality "by 1955". Things would turn out exactly as Deming predicted.

Deming returns to Japan six months later, in January 1951. He visits Japan again in 1952, 1955, 1956, 1960 and 1965.



Deming in Japan (early 1950s)



W. Edwards Deming teaching in Japan, 1951.
In January 1951, Deming returns to Japan as a consultant and teacher to aid JUSE's efforts. JUSE establishes the Deming Prize, which is awarded each year in Japan to a statistician for contributions to statistical theory. The Deming Prize for application is awarded to a company for improved use of statistical theory in organization, consumer research, design of product, and production.



W. Edwards Deming at a train station in Japan, 1951



W. Edwards Deming observing factory workers in Japan, 1951



Deming with Japanese businessmen
and members of JUSE and their wives, 1951



W. Edwards Deming with businessmen, geishas and the Managing Director of the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE), Kenichi Koyanagi (lower row, left) in 1951

Portrait of W. Edwards Deming taken in Tokyo, in 1951



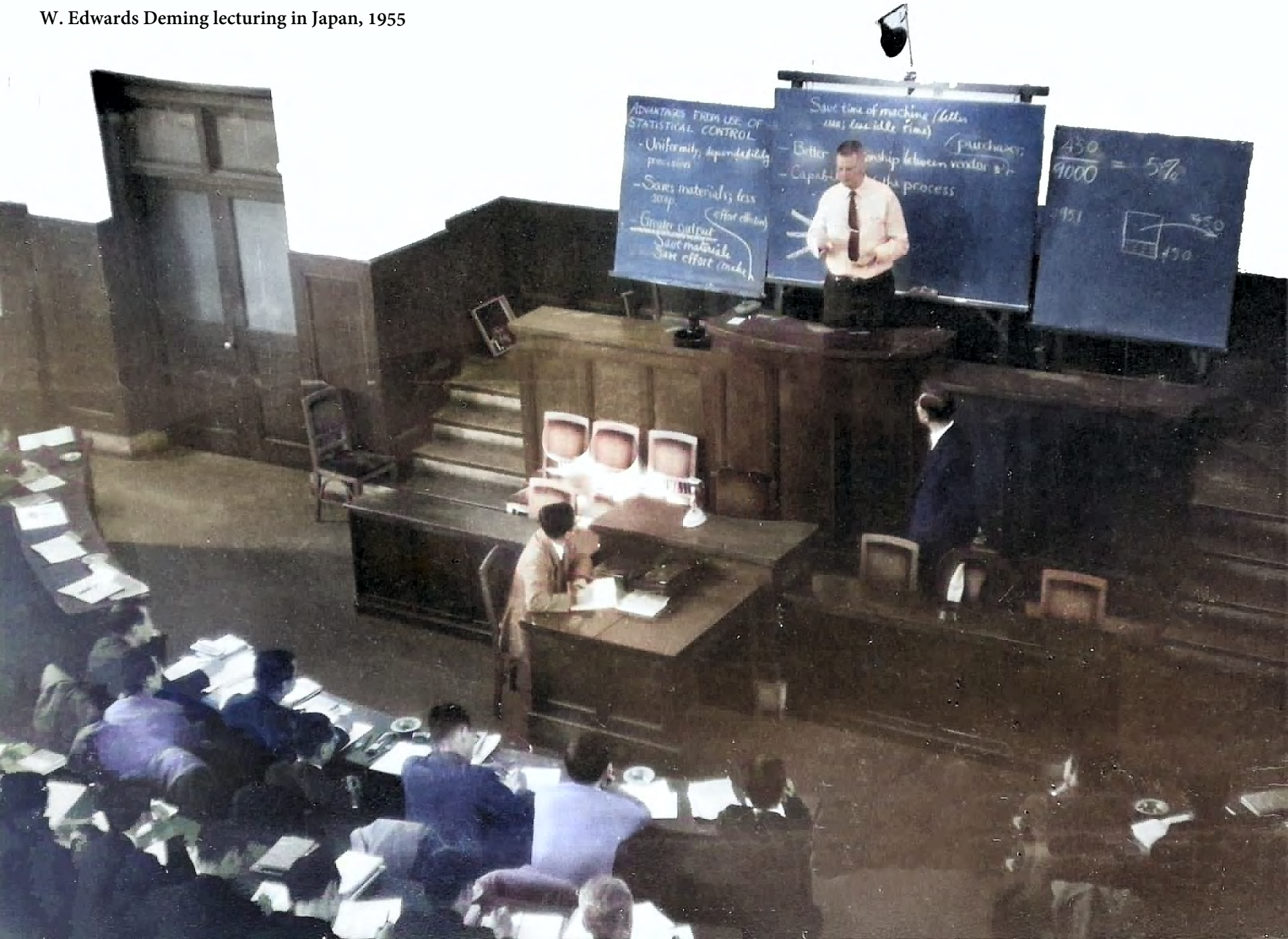


W. Edwards Deming with Japanese businessmen in 1951



In Osaka, 1955. Deming with Mr. Kenichi Koyanagi (Managing Director of JUSE) to his immediate right. In the years 1952 to 1954, Deming's international activities include an "exchange scholarship" in Germany, a stance as consultant at Statistisches Bundesamt, Wiesbaden/Germany, lecturing at universities and academies in Kiel, Frankfurt, Wuppertal-Elberfeld, Nürnberg and Wien. And consulting in Mexico to the Census of Mexico, the Bank of Mexico, and the Ministry of Economy.

W. Edwards Deming lecturing in Japan, 1955

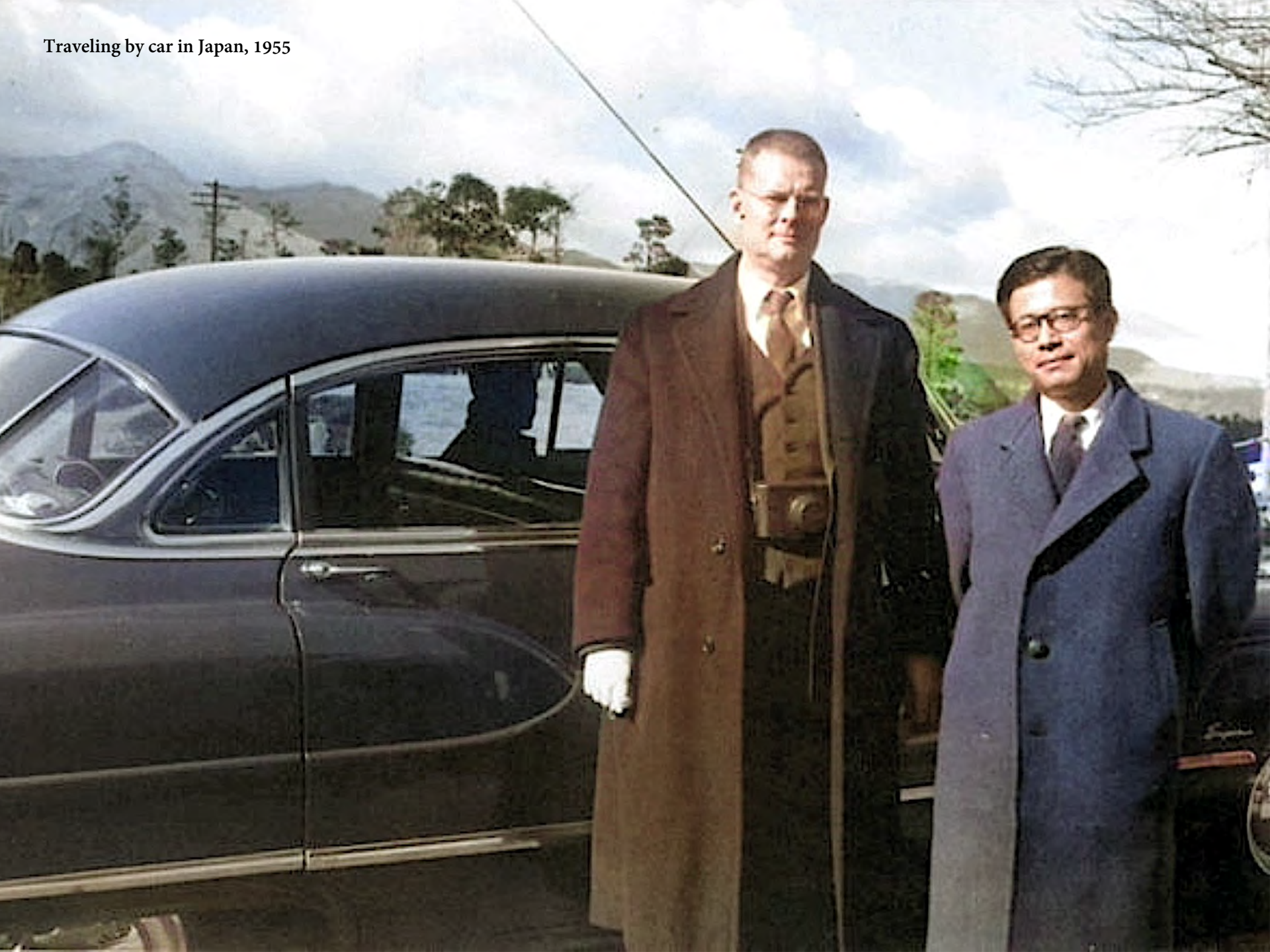




W. Edwards Deming gives a lecture for executives, 1955



Adjacent to the Imperial Palace grounds, Tokyo, in 1955



Traveling by car in Japan, 1955



W. Edwards Deming and his wife Lola Deming observe a worker at Mikimoto pearl plant, 1955



W. Edwards Deming and his wife Lola Deming wearing kimonos, on a pearl diving boat at Mikimoto, 1955



W. Edwards Deming with “geisha” and his wife Lola Deming, 1955



W. Edwards Deming with Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) executives working over tea, 1956



W. Edwards Deming seeming content during a work meeting with JUSE executives, 1956



W. Edwards Deming touring a plant in Japan, 1950s



Deming with assistant Cecilia Kilian at his office in Washington D.C., 1950s



In 1960 W. Edwards Deming is awarded the Second Order Medal of the Sacred Treasure by Emperor Hirohito of Japan, recognizing the philosophy and methods he provided to Japan.

Three decades later, when asked how he felt on receiving this honor, he said he felt unworthy. "I was lucky," he said, showing he considers himself no exception to his own teachings about the effects of the system upon individual performance.



W. Edwards Deming with his wife Lola Deming, after receiving the Second Order Medal of the Sacred Treasure by Emperor Hirohito of Japan, 1960



W. Edwards Deming in Greece in the 1960s, enjoying a Martini. In 1964, Deming lectures in Europe again – this time at the London School of Economics and the Institut de Statistiques de l'Université de Paris.



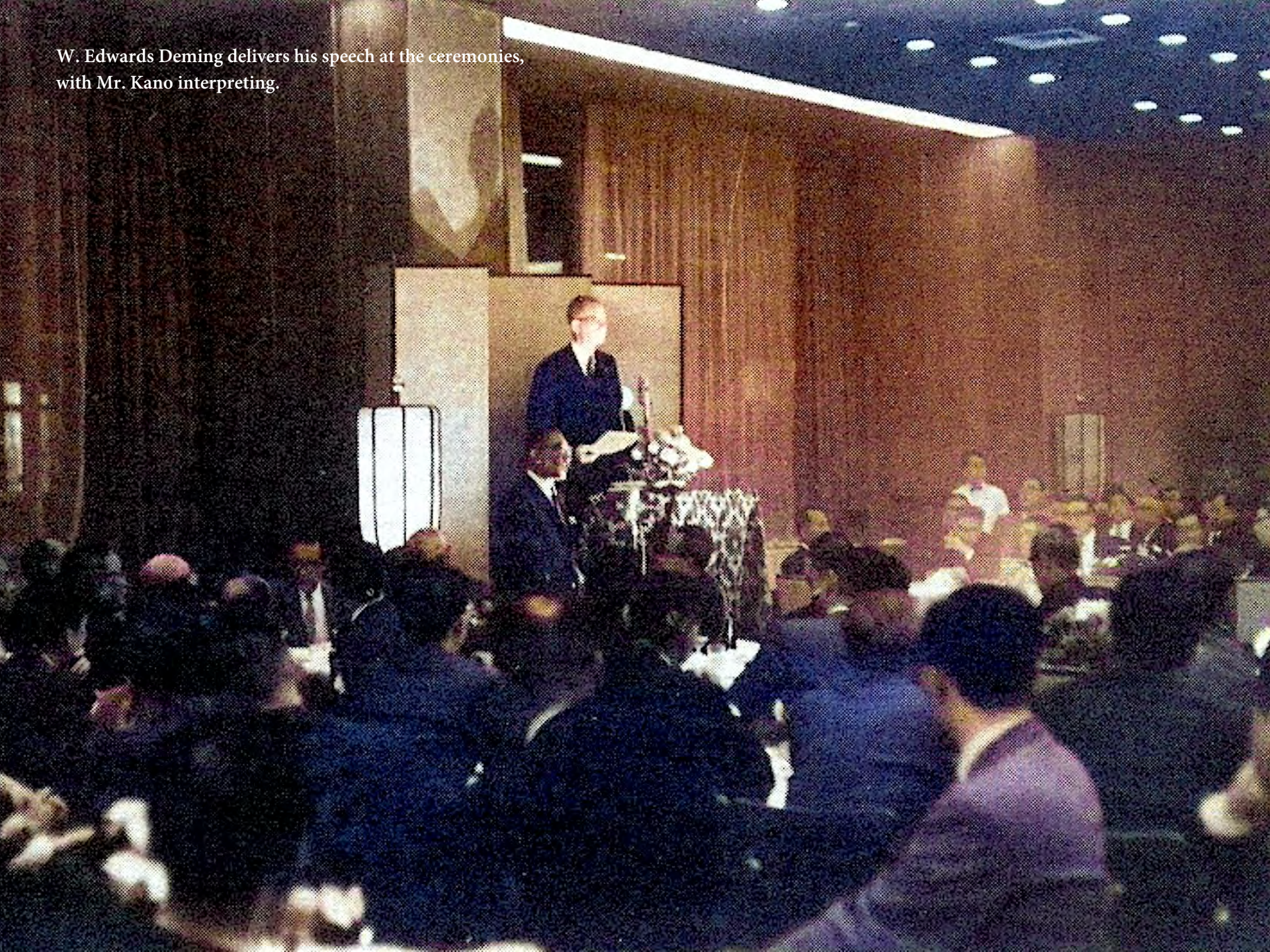
Evaluation for the Deming Prize at the Machining Division of Toyota's Motomachi Plant, in 1965. The vote to award Toyota the Deming Prize is taken taken at an award committee meeting in October.



Evaluation for the Deming Prize at the Toyota head office, in 1965



Dinner at the ceremonies for the Deming Prize on 17 November 1965. The award ceremony is held in the Phoenix Room of the Hotel Imperial, Tokyo.
From left to right: Mr Katsuda, Mr. Kano, W. Edwards Deming, Ichiro Ishikawa.



W. Edwards Deming delivers his speech at the ceremonies, with Mr. Kano interpreting.



W. Edwards Deming with Toyota President Fukio Nakagawa at the award ceremony. Toyota is awarded the Deming Prize in its 15th year, in 1965.



Group photo during the Deming Prize award ceremony in 1965, when Toyota won. With 1965 marking the 15th anniversary of the Deming Prize, the ceremony was "an auspicious event," writes Toyota, attended by "many noted figures from business and academic circles." During this trip to Japan, Deming sees industry changes due to implementation of his ideas and writes "My Seventh Trip to Japan", a 65-page booklet that is privately printed for a few friends.



W. Edwards Deming in his kitchen in Washington, D.C., 1980s. In June 1980, the NBC documentary If Japan Can, Why Can't We? reintroduces Dr. Deming to America. He quickly becomes the voice of quality that sparks the quality revolution. This new-found fame in "the West" would start another career cycle for Deming: He spends the next thirteen years pounding out two books, delivering hundreds of four-day seminars to thousands of attendees, and consult to executives of some of the largest and most well-known companies in the world.

Deming's final book, The New Economics, is published shortly after his passing in 1993 at the age of 93. This book is the culmination of his life's work: It rounds off the insights generated in Japan and beyond during the previous four decades, and synthesizes them in The Deming System of Profound Knowledge.

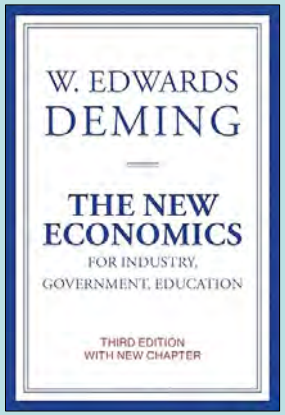


Reprise: W.. Edwards Deming (sitting, left), together with H. James Harrington, Mason Westcott, Joseph M. Juran and Kaoru Ishikawa, in 1986 at ASQ Annual Quality Congress. By now, Deming has become a walking embodiment of the alternative to command-and-control management.

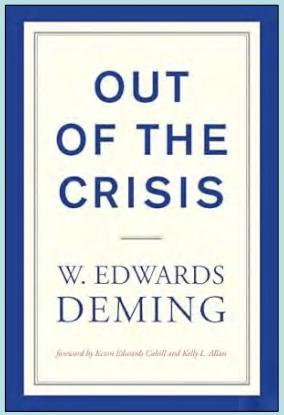


W. Edwards Deming during a trip with views of Mount Fuji, in 1988

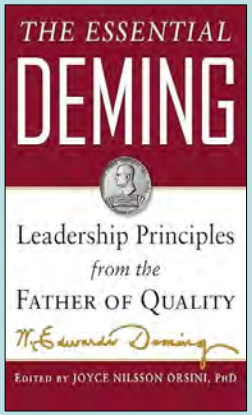
Recommended books by Deming and about Deming



Deming, W. Edwards:
The New Economics
MIT Press, 3rd ed., 2018



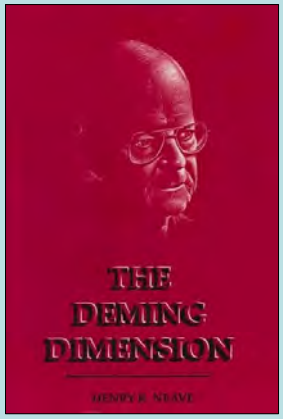
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Out of the Crisis
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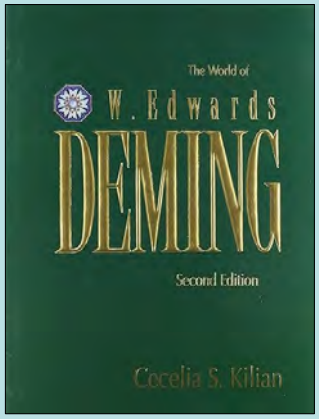
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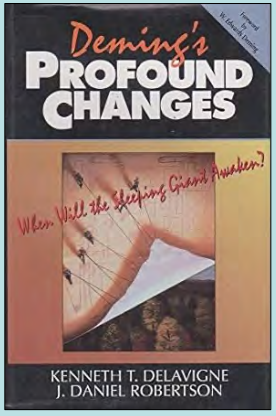
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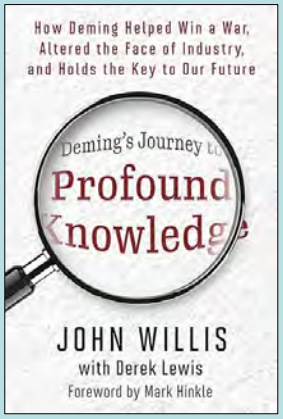
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IT Revolution Press, 2023

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The W. Edwards Deming Institute

All photos in this paper courtesy of the W. Edwards Deming Institute, deming.org, except the Toyota photos (from the toyota-global.com website) and the Toyota group photo with Deming 1965 (from a 10 Nov 2014 tweet by @ToyotaMotorCorp)

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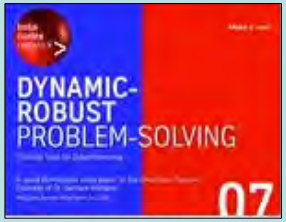










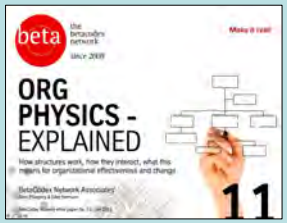
















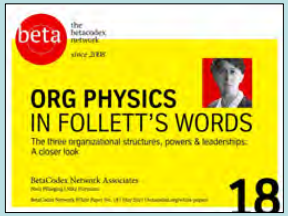


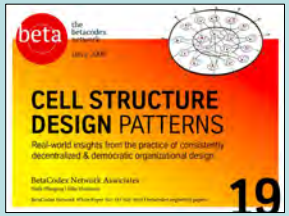


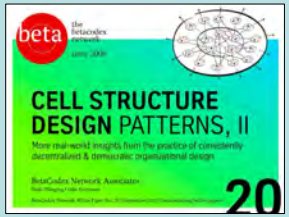


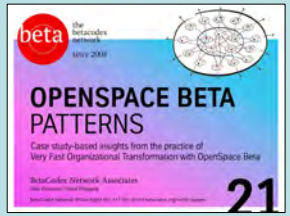
















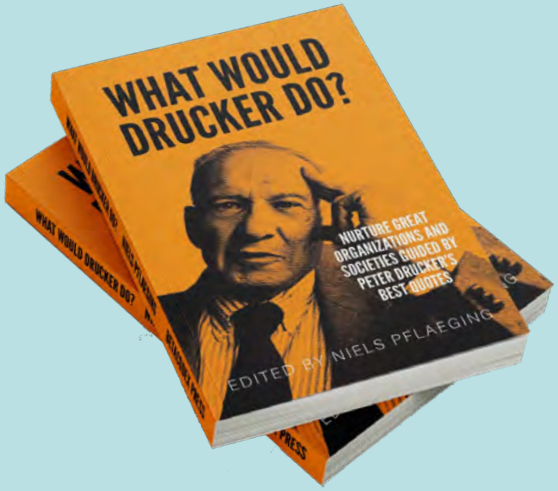
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