

**Y**oshi Sasaki is a man with a dream. A George Lynn Cross Research professor of meteorology at OU, Sasaki envisions a day—in the not-too-distant future—when an international consortium of universities, private businesses and government will work together to alleviate the loss of life and property from such natural disasters as typhoons, hurricanes, tornadoes and flash floods.

Sasaki, who has been called OU's ambassador, already has taken the first step toward his "dream." He assisted OU President Richard L. Van Horn in reaching a 1991 research agreement between the University and Kyoto University in Japan aimed at lessening the devastating effects of natural disasters. As a result of the agreement, a new International Center for Disaster Research was established at OU.

The time is ripe, Sasaki believes, for the peoples and governments of the world to form an international natural disaster consortium.

He notes that while great advances are being made in severe weather detection—he points to NEXRAD, the Next Generation Weather Radar—only the richer, developed countries have the moneys required to develop such costly technology.

At the same time, he says, "Hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes and other natural disasters cost billions of dollars, so governments should be interested in prevention. A worldwide natural disaster warning system would save numerous lives and lessen property damage."

Sasaki can cite many reasons, beyond the obvious humanitarian ones,

to address the issue of natural disasters on a global scale. For instance, the disruption of water lines (for drinking, sewage, etc.) caused by flooding, earthquakes and other natural disasters can lead to major epidemics—cholera and other deadly diseases—diseases that may not be confined to the affected area.

lishment of an international, multidisciplinary consortium composed of both private and public entities to address the various aspects of natural disasters, e.g., prediction, damage and casualty reduction, preparedness and recovery.

The consortium would link researchers from universities in such fields as

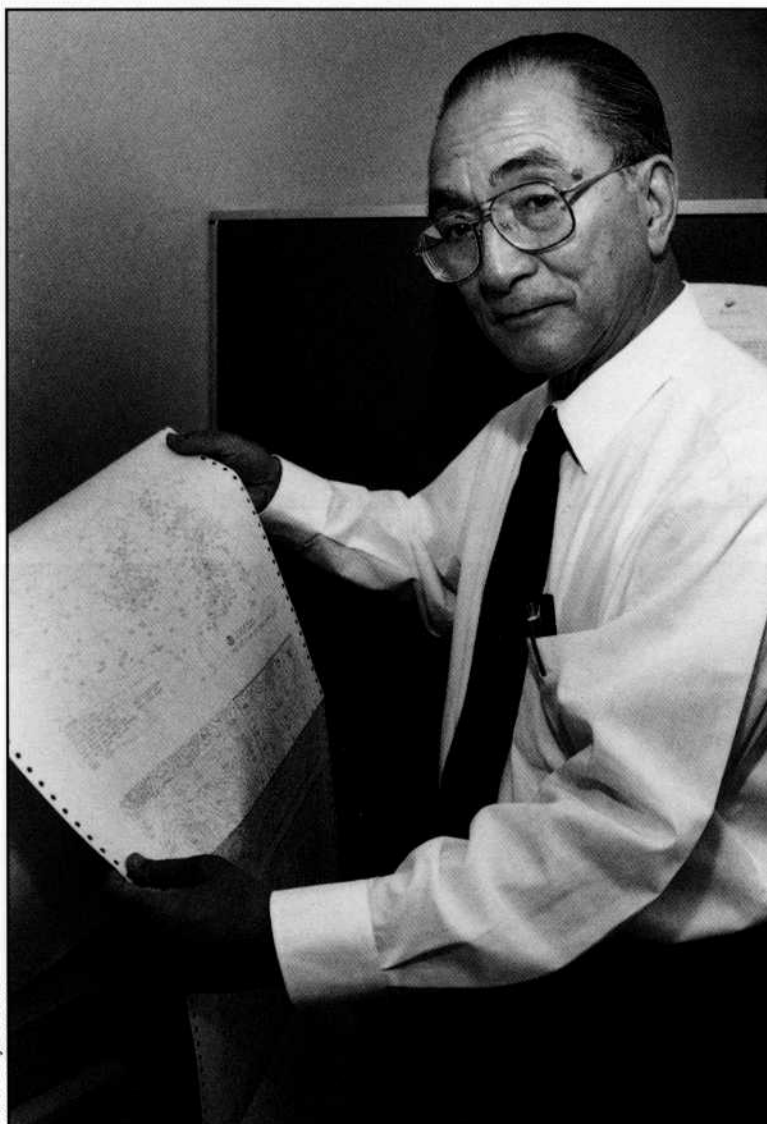
meteorology, geology and geophysics and specialists in a variety of fields, such as telecommunications, construction, insurance and medicine.

A multidisciplinary approach is crucial, Sasaki maintains. He cites an earthquake as an example. To construct a building that will suffer little or no damage during an earthquake, the builders must know not only the properties of earthquakes but also the specific properties of concrete and other materials. Even before the earthquake occurs, a contingency plan should be in place to address communication, health and other needs.

Sasaki also proposes the establishment of an international disaster industry, to be coordinated through the consortium. A broad range of industries could be included under this umbrella, including telecommunications, insurance, construction science and utilities. To establish such an industry, the professor admits, initial government subsidies will be needed to provide

seed money, tax incentives, etc.

Sasaki contends that the establishment of an international disaster industry could spur new technologies, as has the space effort. He theorizes that a watch featuring a miniature radio and telephone, remi-



Photos by Gil Jain

*OU meteorologist Yoshi Sasaki dreams of a time when universities, private businesses and governments unite to lessen the devastating effects of natural disasters such as typhoons, hurricanes, tornadoes and flash floods.*

He acknowledges that the problem's magnitude is such that it cannot be addressed by the world's governments alone. "If we simply ask the government for aid, I don't think the problem will be solved," he says.

Rather, Sasaki proposes the estab-

niscent of that worn by Dick Tracy in the comics, could be developed for people who live in earthquake-prone areas.

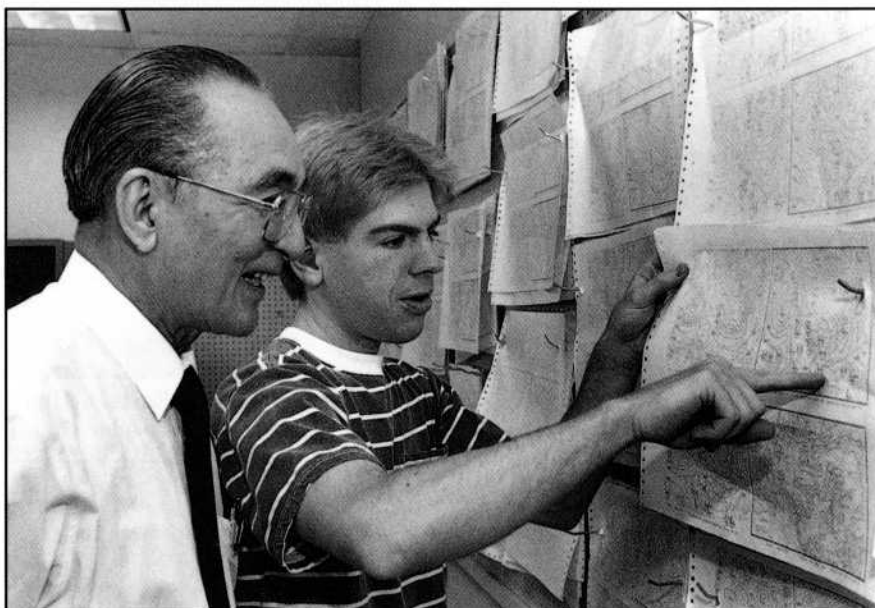
Increased competition arguably would be the most important consequence of a disaster industry. One of the reasons that systems such as NEXRAD are so expensive, Sasaki explains, is that relatively few currently are manufactured. If the incentive existed for companies to produce more, the competition would lower costs.

To some, Sasaki's dream might seem far-fetched. However, his ideas already have been received enthusiastically by fellow researchers from around the world.

The time is coming, the OU professor claims, when a consortium such as the one he is proposing may become a necessity. One of the major issues of the decade, he points out, is the effect of pollution on the Earth's climate. Global warming, leading to the melting of the ice caps and the flooding of huge masses of land, is one scenario. If solutions are to be found, Sasaki insists, they will come about only when people around the world cooperate.

Throughout his career, both in the United States and Japan, Sasaki has worked to promote understanding between the two countries. In 1992 the Japanese foreign minister honored Sasaki for his contributions to U.S.-Japanese academic relations and international affairs. In 1991 Governor David Walters named Sasaki to the Governor's Advisory Council on Asian American Affairs.

He also has been involved in numerous ventures to strengthen the cultural and economic ties between Japan and OU and Oklahoma. For instance, he initiated the sister-school student exchange program with Ritsumeikan University in Japan. In 1984, he participated in an economic trade mission for Oklahoma with then-Lieutenant Governor Spencer Bernard. With his wife Koko, Sasaki also has striven to increase cultural awareness and spur further economic exchanges between Japan and Oklahoma through the Japan-Oklahoma Society, a group created in 1990 to develop mutual understanding and a stronger economic relationship between the two countries.



*As an educator, Sasaki can share his vision for meteorology with the generation that may see his dream realized, such as graduate students Thomas Renkevans, at right in the top photo, and Barrett Schramm, at right in the bottom photo.*

Sasaki's contributions have not been limited to U.S.-Japanese relations. He also was instrumental in establishing sister-school relations between OU and the University of Blaise Pascal in France, which since has become OU's most successful student exchange program.

Sasaki earned his bachelor of science degree in geophysics and his doctoral degree in faculty of science from Tokyo University. Before joining the OU faculty in 1963, he was a research

fellow in meteorology at Tokyo University and a research scientist and graduate faculty member at Texas A&M College (now University) in College Station, Texas.

He is the recipient of several university honors, including the OU Regents' Award for Superior Accomplishment in Professional and University Services in 1991. In 1992, he was named honorary lieutenant governor of Oklahoma.

—JERRICULPEPPER