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"Daily Word" Echoes

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May 29 Meeting (Subject #260)

Memories of Elementary School Days: Happy, sad, ordinary, extraordinary.

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It was the beginning of April 1934 when I entered Kamisugiyamadôri Elementary School in Sendai. The school, which encompassed a playground was made of wood. Cherry blossoms were in full blossom. Our school mark was in the shape of a cherry blossom with the Chinese character *ue/kami* in the center. We newcomers were divided into six classes: White, Red, Yellow, Green, Purple and Blue. I was enrolled in the Yellow Class. Our teacher was a young and beautiful lady. What do you think her name was? It was 八丁目ヨ十五 in Chinese characters, which looked like an address. We called her Hatchôme Sensei. Her given name was Isoko. Incidentally, she got married and became Mrs. Isoko Matsukawa. I confess that I was a careless girl. Every morning my mother had to tell me not to forget anything necessary for school life, such as a handkerchief or school implements.

One day when I was probably in the third grade, she noticed that I had left my compasses at home and, entering the class room, said to me, "Here are your *bunmawashi*", the old Japanese word for a pair of compasses, which along with *tatemakiri*, for a knife, were used in the Meiji era when she herself was an elementary school girl at the end of the 19th century. The pupils in the Shôwa era called these things *konpasu* and *naifu*, as we do now. Some of my classmates chuckled at her words. Sugawara Sensei did not and told me to say "Thank you" to my mother. No other mother came to class so often as mine. After that I became a little more careful to prepare things to take to school on the previous day.

I was so good at Japanese reading and composition that my teacher read what I had written loudly before the class. I was also good at arithmetic, natural science, history and singing. However, I was poor at drawing, calligraphy and, especially, gymnastics. When I began to learn calligraphy in first grade, I used to get Chinese ink on my hands and clothes and sometimes on my face. So mother made me a smock for my calligraphy class. At that time, my teacher was very upset because I refused to participate in the radio gymnastic exercises before studying. Hearing this unpleasant news, father gave me special training in these exercises before supper that evening. My mother and second eldest sister joined in. They were more strict than Hatchôme Sensei. I was forced to follow their instructions. Gradually, my physical coordination improved. But I could not climb up to the top of the wall bars throughout my elementary school days.

When we advanced to fifth grade, we

were divided into three classes for boys and three others for girls. In our new class, there were about forty girls. Our teacher, Mr. Omine, asked each one of us, "What religion does your family profess?" Most of my classmates answered, "Buddhism", but three, including me, answered, "Christianity". He said, "You are fortunate if you believe in the existence of one who is above human beings and depend on him." That was the only comment about religion that I heard from a teacher in my elementary school.

Although I did not learn English in elementary school, I did know some English words. When I was in third or fourth grade, we learned the song, *Ushiwaka maru.*

Kyô no Gojô no hashi no ue,
Dai no otoko no Benkei wa
Nagai naginata furiagete
Ushiwaka megakete kirikakaru.

Ushiwakamaru wa tobinoite
Motta ôgi wo nagesutete
Koi, koi, kôi to,
Rankan no ue ni agatte,
Te wo tataku.

I sang that song with some English words instead of Japanese.

Capital *Gojô no* bridge *no ue*
Big giant *Benkei ga*
Long sword *furiagete*
Ushiwaka megakete cut *suru.*

Ushiwakamaru wa jump *shite*
Motta fan *wo nagesutete*
Come, come, côme *to*
Handrail *no ue ne agatte*
Hand *tataku. Pachi, Pachi* (action)

Everyone in the class was amazed, but foreigners cannot understand the meaning. I enjoyed these kinds of games.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

I was born and grew up in a city. I had, however, the experience of living in the country for two years during my elementary school days. I was puzzled about the various customs there. I knew nothing about them when I arrived, but I soon got accustomed to them. At the time, I did not like to live there, but now I think that it was a very important and valuable experience and I have vivid memories of it.

For instance, I transplanted rice, washed a carpet in a stream, drank *amacha* on April 8th, the birthday of the Buddha and gathered locusts from the heads of rice plants for the farmers as a part of school activities. I can never have such experiences again. How many new customs I learned and how many new experiences I had there! I am very grateful for them. This theme has stimulated memories of my elementary school days.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

It was in 1939, two years after the outbreak of the China Incident, that I entered an elementary school in Tokyo. I remember I was impressed by the beautiful sight of cherry blossoms near the gate of the school. Several days after school began, I was designated *kyûchô* by our class teacher and I enjoyed giving commands in the classroom.

When I was a third grader, the Pacific War began. Some people around me shouted, "At last it's begun!" but I was too young to easily understand the situation at that time. Changes that occurred in society compelled us to realize that we were in a national emergency. Many of my memories of my elementary school days are deeply connected with the war as a matter of fact. We repeatedly, as a daily experience, sent off soldiers going to the front. Mere child as I was, I wondered whether a green grocer in the neighborhood could really go

into a battle against the enemy. Motion pictures in theaters were all militaristic ones, aimed at inspiring people (especially youth) with patriotism. Our school teacher took us to the theaters to see these films. I still believe that this kind of militaristic education influenced me to take an examination for a *yônen-gakkô*, a military preparatory school, some years later. (By the way, a couple of months after passing the examination, the war came to an end.) Our teacher ordered us to learn by heart "The Imperial Rescript for Youth", which we recited even though we could not understand its exact meaning. In those days, we were convinced that Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai Shek were all wicked men disturbing world peace.

As time went on,the tide of war turned against us. Many soldiers at the front died, but never surrendered because they had been taught: "A man of honor would rather die with his name unstained than survive with disgrace." The remains of soldiers were sent back in rapid succession to the bereaved families. We called it *mugon no gaisen,* or silent return. Around 1943, air raids by American carrier-based planes went into action. The government had given instruction beforehand on fire fighting using water barrels and buckets. But people soon realized how useless such training was when confronted with actual fighting beyond imagination. The government determined to remove pupils from big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka to rural dictricts in order to preserve its war potential in the future. Pupils had to choose one of two ways of evacuation: evacuation in a group or evacuation to the home of a relative. I chose the latter and when I was a fifth grader, I changed to a school in Hiroshima, my mother's native place. About one year afterward, I entered a middle school in that city and soon experienced the great catastrophe of the atomic bomb in August of the same year.

(MIKIHIKO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

In those days, my family lived in Yoshiike, Kariya-shi and, like everyone else, we were not experiencing a comfortable life, but that doesn't mean that life was not enjoyable. In fact, those years may be considered one of the most enjoyable periods in my life and one particular event stands out as "unusual".

I often played with Takayasu Nomura, a son of Dr. Nomura, one of the best-known physicians in my neighborhood. One Sunday morning, Takayasu came to my house and invited me to go with him to a nearby Christian Church. He and his family seemed to attend church, but I had never been to church, for my family's religion was Jôdô Shinshû. That was my very first visit to a building of a Western religion.

Takayasu and I went into the church and, to me, it was a very fantastic world, totally different from what I had ever experienced. I still remember joining the congregation in singing hymns and putting a ¥5 coin in the offering. That was a pleasant experience, but I never went to church again for a long time after that.

Many years later, however, when I became a high school student, I found out that that was the church where Rev. Offner was the pastor and, still years later, I was very happy to become one of the most enthusiastic fans of the "Daily Word" telephone service provided by the same minister. **(TOMOYASU KIMURA**, Nishi, Nagoya)

Speaking of memories of my elementary school days, I think of my mother who was very strict about manners and studying. In particular, she did not permit me to refuse to eat foods I disliked. There are two things I have never forgotten. One of

them is about foods.

I hated carrots, but there were some cooked carrots on the table every meal time. I always gave some of them to my younger brother without mother's knowledge, but one day she caught sight of me doing that and forced me to eat all of them. Unwillingly, I ate them after holding my nose and closing my eyes. Sometimes, she served boiled vegetables mixed with rice and included some sliced carrots. It tasted good and now I like a vegetable salad with carrots in it.

The other thing was related to homework. In those days, there were no private tutoring services and we had to study by ourselves. So the lesson we learned in school on a certain day had to be remembered and homework related to it had to be done that same day. My mother used to help me with my lessons every day after supper, but sometimes I couldn't understand or solve a problem even though she taught me eagerly. One snowy winter night, she suddenly got angry and put me outdoors without shoes. I cried for a while in the snow, but soon an old lady who lived next door came out and persuaded me to ask my mother to pardon me. Still, I couldn't sleep all night because my feet and body were as cold as stone. After that, I studied hard, graduated from high school and normal college and became a teacher as I had hoped.

I owe to my mother what I am. I felt bitter against my mother at first, but now I feel thankful to her from the bottom of my heart.

(MIE[illegible]KUMURA, Mizuho, Nagoya)

I was born just after the Pacific War at the tip of the Chita Peninsula. Due to shortages of food and other commodities, our daily life was very hard. We had to do many chores to help our parents. Almost every morning, I rode my bicycle to an agent to deliver the two dozen wool gloves on which my mother had worked until late at night sewing on animal decorations. Those gloves must have been exported to the U. S. for American boys and girls.

As we had no waterworks in my town, I had to carry many buckets of water from a well to my house. In the evening, I carried water for bathing and burned firewood which was gathered from the fields around our farm. In summer, the well often dried up. In that case, I carried water from the well below a hill to our home.

On Sundays, our family went to the small farm we rented from a relative. In spring, I dug up the ground with a hoe to plant sweet potatoes. In autumn, we dug up a number of sweet potatoes and sowed seeds of wheat. These foods were important for our family. Even now, I remember the scene of my mother pulling a cart from the farm to our home in heavy rain. During the summer vacation, I got up at 5 a.m. and hurried to a fish shop. The sea was yet clean and there were many fish at that time. I used to buy 15 small horse mackereis for 30 yen.

Despite the many chores, we had many ways to amuse ourselves after school. One way was to play *donma*. Boys were divided into two groups. The boys in one group became "horses"--each boy bending at the waist and putting his head between the legs of the boy in front of him. Boys in the other group jumped on these "horses" and tried to crush them.

During the past forty years, the situation has changed dramatically. Though many people come to the southern part of the Chita Peninsula to eat fresh fish, I hear that many fish served to the guests are imported or brought from other prefectures. The sea had become contaminated and fish are becoming extinct. Children

suppose that their only job is learning at school or cram school and are not expected to do any chores. We rarely see children shopping at fish shops or vegetable stores. **(YOSHIHISA KAWAHARA**, Mihama, Aichi)

When I think back on my elementary school days, I always recall the village of Miyoshi in Tochigi Prefecture, where my father was born and raised. My family lived there during World War II and for three years afterward. Fortunately this village never suffered an air raid. I entered the local elementary school the year the war ended and studied there for three years until I became a fourth grader. So memories of the first half of my elementary school days are closely connected with rural life in an idyllic setting.

My father's home was located near the school. I often went to the school yard with neighborhood friends after school. The school compound was surounded by many big cherry trees. In April when the cherry blossoms were in full bloom, we chased after the falling petals under the trees, collecting them in our outspread skirts. The girl who accumulated the most petals won. I was slow and always gathered the fewest petals. However, that was my favorite game at that time.

Most of the villagers were farmers. There was no school during the busiest farming seasons. When rice was planted in May and harvested in October, the farmers were extremely busy and needed even the childrens' hands. Elder children worked hard with their parents in the field, but we younger children had not so many things to do. I loved these periods of no school. The weather was perfect to play outdoors.

The life of the village was rustic. There was electricity but no gas, and electricity was used only for lighting. The villagers needed firewood for cooking and heating water for baths. Children were sent to the forest in the hills to gather dead twigs and leaves for fuel. The forest was a wonderful place for them to explore. When they got there, the first thing they did was to search for berries to eat. Boys climbed trees and swung down on a liana like Tarzan did in the movies. Girls picked flowers and made a bouquet or a crown and looked for edible mushrooms or wild vegetables.

There was a small pond in the forest. The water was frozen in the winter time. We enjoyed skating there, not on skates, but on our ragged shoes. One day a boy put on the "geta-skates" his father had made and slid on the ice. How envious of him we were! He let us put on his "geta-skates", but we fell down on our bottoms as soon as we stood up.

In the summer, we went to the river to go swimming. The water was very clean, transparent and cold. Athough we were strictly told not to swim too long, we stayed in the water for such a long time that when we returned our faces had no color. We put a warm stone on our lips to recover our complexion. I was clumsy and could not swim. My big brother and his friends caught some minnows, called *medaka* in Japanese, and forced me to swallow them. They believed *medaka* had magical power to help those children who could not swim. I did as I was told. However, I still remained like a stone in the water.

We invented various kinds of games appropriate for each season and enjoyed playing them in natural surroundings. More fortunately, we had no cram schools and no entrance exams. Generally speaking, children some forty years ago were happier than those today. However, those children who lived in rural regions, evacuated from the cities and separated from their families during the war have sad memories. If I

had been a little older and lived in an unknown village without the protection of my parents and good relatives, I would have been hungry, badly treated and discriminated against like they were. I feel sorry for them and feel somewhat guilty of not sharing those sad experiences with them. **(NAOMI KONDO**, Handa)

When I was four years old, our family moved to a small town on the Chita Peninsula to escape from the disastrous bombing of Nagoya. The year the war ended, I entered elementary school. There were many pupils who had been evacuated from cities like our family. So one year later, about one-third of the classmates had gone back to their home cities. Two of my best friends in the neighborhood who walked to school and played together with me moved to someplace, I don't know where. But our family couldn't go back to our home city of Nagoya because our house was destroyed and my father didn't come back from the battlefield. Our homeroom teachers were changed two or three times a year. And our whole family seemed to be always reminiscing about our home city and the life there. Although that might not be the only reason, I was a rather quiet and passive girl in school.

I do have one pleasant memory, however. In the fourth grade, our music teacher used to let us make songs, including both words and music. One of my songs was chosen for rendition at a school assembly. I was very shy and not a very good singer, but with the help of two of my friends, I managed to sing it on the stage in front of a large audience. Even now, I can sing it and I also can remember the dress I wore at the meeting which my mother made for me out of her own kimono. Several years ago, when I told this story to my friend who had become a music teacher, she was very surprised that there was such a great music teacher who educated us in such a modern way in such an old and confusing time. Without realizing it, I might have been surrounded with many more nice things in my elementary school days. **(YOSHIKO TOYOTA**, Kanie, Aichi)

I would like to mention three kinds of memories.

1) Earthquake. It was the day of the opening ceremony of the second term, September the first. I was in the first grade in school and six years old. I had come back home from school and was playing with my eldest brother. Suddenly, we felt the shock of a great earthquake just two minutes before noon. All eight members of our family gathered in our garden. It was the great earthquake of 1923 *(Kantô Daishinsai,* in Japanese). Fortunately our house was not destroyed, but as it was dangerous to stay in the house, we hung two or three mosquito nets between trees. A few days later, we could live in our house as usual. Earthquakes are one of the most dreadful of natural disasters.

2) Drama. One of the school events at that time was a *gakugeikai.* Parents and neighbors were invited to a presentation of plays, choruses, concerts and dramas. Generally, the *gakugeikai* was held in the fall, once a year. When I was seven years old, in second grade, wearing a yellow dress, I danced a kewpie doll on the stage accompanied by a piano and sang with a classmate of mine: *Kyûpî san, kyûpî san, doshite sonnani ôkina omeme o mina patto hiraite tatteruno tatteruno* ("Why are you standing in the nude as you are, with your big eyes open so wide?") We were so happy that many clapped for us! It was my first and last experience of appearing on a stage

3) Airship. A very large, silver-grey airship was quietly floating high above our

garden in Tokyo on a hot summer day. We enjoyed looking up and waving our hands. In a little while, it moved slowly to the west, without noise. It was a zeppelin airship that called on Tokyo on its way around the world from Germany. Finally, not long afterward, the zeppelin airship ended in failure.

(**TAMAKO MORIMOTO**, Tsuyama)

I have vivid recollections of two events. The one was an euphoric moment when I was a first grader; the other took place when I was in sixth grade. One day I was taught how to write the kana letter "o" and then was instructed to practice writing the same letters in my notebook. I was very obedient and patiently endured the drudgery of repeatedly writing the same letters in my notebook. My work was marked with a fivefold circle to show that it was excellent. The big circle which I got for the first time made me feel as if I were walking on air. Upon returning home, I lost no time in telling my mother what I got in class. Mother shared the euphoria with me and I do not remember her with a happier look than I saw at that time.

The above story shows that encouragement of students is vital in education in that it induces pupils to make a greater effort to improve themselves.

The second incident took place while I was involved in cramming bits of information for the entrance examination of a middle school. I joined some of my friends who were at the top of my class to cram Japanese history for the entrance exam. When we got tired, we would have a break, listening to records of popular songs and singing to ourselves snatches of some of them. Small wonder that even now I can sing some of the popular songs I was absorbed in listening to and singing at those breaks, while all of what I learned by rote then on Japanese history has completely slipped out of my memory.

This story epitomizes the uselessness of cramming bits of information.

I would like to add another story. It is a sad one. I still remember what happened to my house while Typhoon Muroto, one of the fiercest storms that ever invaded the mainland of Japan in the first half of this century, swept across western Japan. In September 1934, I was a fourth grader. In spite of the strong gusts of wind accompanied by heavy rain we had had since early morning, I ventured to school, just a few blocks away from my home. On reaching the classroom, the storm suddenly got even stronger. The extraordinary rattling of the classroom windowpanes frightened me very much. I was simply trembling, shoulder to shoulder, with some friends when we heard the deafening noise of the science laboratory's windows breaking.

Toward noon, however, the storm began to subside. I was on my way home from school when I was astounded to find that the wall, three meters high and some dozen meters long, which had stood in front of my house was no longer there. From the street, I could see directly into the very interior of my home. What a surprise! The storm was so violent that it blew down that solidly built high wall. I do not know how much the damage cost my father, but it was not until many days had passed that the wall was reconstructed as before. Afterward, it was reported that the terrible typhoon had claimed the lives of dozens of young students plus some of their teachers in the Osaka City area alone.

In retrospect, little progress has been made in terms of preventive measures against possible natural disasters being taken by society. I am sorry to point this out after so many years.

(**SHOJI SUGIMOTO**, Suginami, Tokyo)

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May 31 Message (Subject #261)

The second theme for the 46th issue of the Echoes *is* Kôban, *or Japanese local police boxes. These ministations, found in many residential or business communities, have served an important function in maintaining peace and order in Japanese society. In recent months, police officers from the United States and five Central American countries have come to Japan to study* kôban. *I would be interested in reading your thoughts or experiences related to* kôban. *Have you had occasion to visit them? If so, why and when? What do you think are their strong points and why do you think foreign policemen come to study them?*

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I have three memories of visiting a *kôban*. The first experience was when I was a child. My friend had picked up a small coin on the road, so we went together to report it to the police. The policeman was very kind and said, "You are good girls." I hoped to find another coin and take it to the police box myself, but I have not done so until now.

The next experience was about forty years ago. I was looking for the house of one of my high school teachers. A policeman kindly told me where it was. It was very near my house, but I did not know it for two years. I thought the *kôban* was very convenient at that time.

The third time was five years ago. A man was sleeping in front of my house. My husband was absent. I could not talk to a drunken man but felt uneasy about his health because the weather was cold at night. I telephoned the *kôban* and a policeman came and took him away.

I do not know why foreign policemen visit Japanese *kôban*, but as for me, I am very thankful for them.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

The word *kôban* is an abbreviation of *kôban-sho*. Originally, *kôban* was an abstract noun which meant "being on duty by turns" and, therefore, a *kôban-sho* was a place where public officials did their duties on rotation. At the beginning of the Meiji era, when a modern police system was inaugurated, the government established many *kôban-sho* throughout the country to maintain public peace and order. *Kôban* were located mainly in urban districts, while in rural districts *chûzai-sho* were established where a policeman resided (when he was a married man, with his family) and performed his duties. The power of the police in prewar days was very strong and the authority of each *kôban* also was influential in the community, deriving its power from the government. People feared policemen but, at the same time, they relied on them.

In prewar days, the policemen's call, *"oi, kora"*, was notorious because people (especially in Tokyo) felt intimidated by it. But that was quite a misconception. The expression, which comes from the dialect of Kagoshima Prefecture and originally meant *moshi-moshi*, or "hello", was rather a polite expression. In the Meiji era, many policemen in Tokyo coming from Kagoshima used this expression, which soon became commonly used as a kind of salutation. The police system was much democratized after the war and the expression *"oi, kora"* ceased to be used, but the authority of the *kôban* has been maintained.

Many foreigners say Japan is one of the safest countries in the world. Young girls can return home safely without male escorts at midnight. Before the war, people

did not even bother to lock their doors at night. Such a favorable condition of public peace and order owes very much to our police system, especially to the existence of *kôban*. We can always feel at ease when we remember we have *kôban* in our neighborhood. *Kôban* is a symbol of public peace in the region. It was an exceptional accident that some particular *kôban* were attacked and destroyed by mobs of rioters in Tokyo (Sanya) and Osaka (Kamagasaki) in the days of disorder after the war. I am not sure whether the *kôban* (police box) system is peculiar to our country, but it must not be common throughout the world judging from the fact that many foreign police officers, including Americans, come to Japan to study that system. I hear that in some Southeast Asian countries the system has been already adopted and has a good reputation. The Japanese word *kôban* itself is widely used there instead of "police box" or other words of the actual places, maybe because the word is simple and easy to pronounce.

I have no special experience of utilizing *kôban* except for asking directions. My house has never been robbed and I have not been endangered by others in spite of the fact that I have lived here for more than 60 years. I realize Japan is a very safe country. **(MIKIHIKO YOSHIMOTO**, Gifu)

I have been helped three times by *kôban* policemen. The first event happened 35 years ago when our eldest daughter was three years old. Sometimes she used to come to meet me with my husband when it was time for me to return home. But one day, she went out by herself without my husband knowing it and got lost by making a wrong turn along the street. When I arrived at home, she was not in the house and my husband also was surprised to know it. Soon we were looking for her here and there. We also telephoned a few police boxes in that area. At last, we found her at one of them. The policemen were very troubled because she couldn't speak enough but only knew that her father was an oil painter.

The second time was related to car trouble when my second eldest daughter was driving. We stopped at a traffic light but the car would not start because something was wrong with the engine. We became confused about what to do. Fortunately there was a public telephone box and a police box near that intersection. My daughter telephoned the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) and I went to the police box to ask help in moving the car to the side of the road. We waited a long time until the JAF car arrived after 6:00 o'clock in the evening and we couldn't leave there until 6:30. We were very thankful that no accident occurred and that there was both a public telephone and a police box nearby.

The last experience was when I asked directions after becoming lost on the way to my friend's house where I had never gone before. She had given me directions on the phone, but I couldn't find her house. With the help of the police, at last I found it easily.

For me, the existence of the police box is like a divine presence.

(MIEKO OKUMURA, Mizuho, Nagoya)

When I was an elementary school pupil, we used to say, "A policeman is coming" if our playmates did something mischievous. Yes, a police officer was considered a frightful person. As an actual occurrence, we saw a policeman striking a poor kneeling man with a saber in the police box, which was near the Katsuyama Park where we used to play. The poor man must have been forced to confess something. In those days, such a scene could be seen publicly.

When I was in Sendai, my sphere of activity was limited. I don't know how many police boxes there were in Sendai. Once I was lost on my way home and was taken to the Nishi Kôen police box when I was eight years old. I was given protection there. When I was in high school, I took a purse which I had found on the street to the Higashi Sanbanchô police box. Soon after that, the purse which contained ¥3, a considerable sum of money at that time, was given to me as the owner did not appear. And when I was working for Dr. Hansen, I visited the police box in Minamimachi to ask the way to the home of the famous poet, Bansui Tsuchii (not Bansui Doi), in order to deliver a present to him from Dr. Hansen. It was very fortunate for me to have become acquainted with policemen when I grew older.

Now I am pondering why the Japanese *kôban* system is considered worthy of study by foreign policemen. Fukushima, where I live now, has a population of 283,498. The main police station is in the center of the city; there are nine *kôban*, local police boxes, in the old town and seven police sub-stations in the new town, which includes farms. Each of the policemen in these branches is in charge of his district and makes his rounds frequently. If he comes across somebody who looks dubious, he will question the person and if the person runs away, the policeman will give a description to the policemen in the nearest two or three police boxes in the direction the suspect is running. They will then rush out of their police boxes with their truncheons looking for the suspect. In Fukushima, it is about four blocks between one police box and the next, and the policeman in charge visits each house and checks the personal record of each member of a household in his area. Policemen can help people who cannot find a house or office as they have maps which show every structure on the streets and avenues in Fukushima. During his patrol, a policeman sometimes finds cars parked illegally. Women suspects are body checked by female police officers.

There are many admirable aspects evident in the police boxes of this city. Children these days like to visit a *kôban*, bringing flowers to decorate the places that are considered to be lacking in taste. Don't you think that one of the most positive factors of Japanese *kôban* is that they can be relied upon by the good citizens, especially the children, in the area?

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

Kôban, called police box in English, include the *hashutsu-jo* of urban areas and the *chûzai-sho* in the countryside. *Kôban* were established early in the Meiji era in 1881 and on April1984 there were about 15,000 *kôban* throughout Japan. Duties of *kôban* policemen include standing guard, keeping watch, visiting from door to door and patrolling their assigned districts. They also collect information regarding the residents of their area.

If the finder of money reports it to a *kôban* and if the person who lost it does not appear for half a year, the total amount is given to the finder. If the loser appears within half a year, the finder is given ten percent. I have neither been a finder nor a loser of money. An *omawari-san* will lend money to a person who has lost it. I have not had any occasion to visit a *kôban*. Its strong points are that the *omawari-san* are well-known to the residents and are always on the citizen's side. The reason why foreign policemen come to study them is because the *kôban* system is unique and charming.

(TAMAKI IORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

When I must visit a place in a town where I am a perfect stranger, I make it a rule to look for a *kôban* near the railway station and to ask a policeman on duty there to tell me the way to my destination.

I had vaguely taken it for granted that, not only was there a local police box everywhere in this country, but that every civilized nation had such a police system. But this is not true. The *kôban* system is uniquely Japanese. After I consulted an encyclopedia, I learned that there are about 15,000 *kôban* (as of 1984) throughout the country. The *kôban* system covers every nook and corner of the whole nation. Where does the system come from?

The encyclopedia I consulted did not provide the answer to that question, but I suspect that experiences during the Edo era, which lasted nearly 300 years, had something to do with the matter. While reading E. O. Reischauer's book, *Japan Past and Present,* I happened to come across these lines: "The Edo government has the dubious distinction of being one of the first governments in the world to develop an extensive and efficient secret police system and to make of it an important organ of state." In my view, the Meiji government remodeled that old system of the Edo Bakufu into a modern version, named *kôban.* The system has served as an important organ of state to maintain social order and security. According to news reports on July 1st, *kôban* becomes the legitimate name, replacing the older names of *hashutsujo* in a town or *chûzaisho* in a village. (**SHOJI SUGIMOTO**, Suginami, Tokyo)

"The Lord keeps close watch over the whole world, to give strength to those whose hearts are loyal to him."

(II Chronicles 16:9)

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June 7 Message (Subject #261)

In classical Western literature, Shakespeare's dramas hold an esteemed place and, along with the Bible, are often quoted in learned lectures and writings. A number of dramatic forms have appeared in the course of Japanese history, including nô, kyôgen *and* kabuki. *Nowadays, there are more modern types of dramas, including those seen on television. The Bible contains many dramatic stories and the entire book of Job, in the Old Testament, is an ancient drama. For those who wish to write an essay, I am suggesting the theme of: Drama. You may write your opinions of Western dramas or of the various kinds of Japanese drama. Have you read any of Shakespeare's dramas? Could you understand them? Have you read the book of Job? If you have, what was your impression? Do you ever go to see* kabuki *or* nô *dramas? Have you participated in dramatic productions yourself? How do you compare or contrast Japanese drama with that of the West?*

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According to an English dictionary, a "drama" is a play which is to be performed by actors on the stage, or the art of writing and producing plays. In Western literature, dramas by Shakespeare are most famous as Dr. Offner mentioned. Some of the literary works that come to mind upon hearing his name are: *Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet,* etc. Most of us know these works in Japanese versions or as English readings summarized for the use of middle and high school students, because the original works are too

difficult for ordinary people to understand. (By the way, my wife majored in English literature in university and wrote on his works for her graduation thesis so I can find related books on our bookshelves.) Many boys and girls know the plots of these dramas and the famous sayings in them, such as, "To be, or not to be, that is the question," in *Hamlet.*

Japanese traditional types of dramas or plays are kabuki and noh. (*Kyôgen* is another genre, but it has usually been considered an accompaniment of noh.) Kabuki's roots go back to an Izumo Shrine maiden named Okuni who performed kabuki dances in Kyoto during the early Edo era. ("Kabuki" means to act in an unusual manner.) Kabuki is an actor's theater and the actor's skill is all. One of its characteristics is that all the roles are played by male actors. Among the best-known kabuki playwrights are Chikamatsu Monzaemon and Kawatake Mokuami. Chikamatsu is particularly famous, often being compared to Shakespeare.

Noh has a longer history than kabuki. It originated in dramatic performances at religious festivals in the middle of the 14th century and it was developed in the Muromachi era by Kan-ami and his son, Zeami, who both distinguished themselves in the art of noh as Chikamatsu did in kabuki. Noh continued to flourish in the Edo era under the patronage of the daimyo and became a favored entertainment of the samurai class.

Although kabuki and noh are considered together as typical, traditional entertainment, there is a little difference between them. Kabuki actors' facial makeup is unique, as seen in the *ukiyo-e* paintings, and their gestures are somewhat exaggerated. Noh actors, on the other hand, wear unique classical costumes and masks, called *noh-men,* and their movements are rather slow. Of course, the mask itself does not show any expression of joy, anger, affection or pleasure. When a man is said to have a "*noh-men*-like face", it means that he shows no emotion. As the action in noh is generally slow-moving, it is often boring. When a famous French Minister of Cultural Affirs once saw a noh play, he said: "I was bored to death. Seeing a noh play is a kind of punishment."

Retiring from the front line of public life, I have begun to learn *utai,* or chanting of noh drama texts. *Utai* is good for one's health because it requires the utterance to come from the bottom of one's stomach. It is also beneficial for understanding noh plays because, needless to say, *utai* are the narration and chorus accompanying noh plays. **(MIKIHIKO YOSHIMOTO**, Gifu)

When I was in middle school, I saw Shakespeare's drama, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* performed by drama club members at an annual school festival. As I had read that drama (through a translation) before that, together with other dramas such as *The Merchant of Venice,* I was able to enjoy it to a great extent. At that time, I was again able to recognize Shakespeare's superior ability. I had an opportunity to read *Richard III* in college.

I saw *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* in movie theaters. *Hamlet* was produced in the U. S. S. R. in those days and the soundtrack was in Russian, so I could not understand the dialogue at all without reading the superimposed script. But I remember the scene of the famous monologue spoken by the actor, "To be or not be; that is the question." It was very impressive.

(YASUKO IZUMI, Seto)

I read all 36 of Shakespeare's dramas when I was studying English literature at Kinjo Gakuin. On the other hand, I enjoyed

going to see Japanese *kabuki* or *nô* at that time. I enjoy seeing and hearing opera dramas now because I am more fond of Western music than Japanese.

Comparatively speaking, many Japanese dramas have a gloomy mood, which cannot be helped. Western dramas include a concept of salvation, given by God, which has a deep meaning and changes the mood from a sorrowful one to a joyful one.

It is said that our lives are dramas. Even seemingly trivial matters may indicate God's will. We constantly experience God's love, so I want to write the drama of my life with a thankful heart to God.

(**MICHIKO SANO**, Minami, Nagoya)

In the name of common sense, if I lost not only my possessions but also my children without any reason, as Job did, I would say, "Oh, God! It's too much. It's unreasonable!" However, Job said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I was impressed by his words. After that, Job suffered from a bad skin disease. What a hard time Job had! Even his wife made light of him. His three friends reproved him for imaginary sins. No wonder he complained about his life. How happy Job was when God answered him in the storm. Any words from God would be acceptable to Job. Although Job was upright, God let him know only God is the Almighty. It was very good of him.

The book of Esther is also a great drama. Shakespeare, the great playwright, also must have been influenced by the Bible.

At Miyagi Gakuin College, my alma mater, from1914 to1941, Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies were performed by the students in October every year under Miss Lindsey's direction. I know a lady who took the part of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1928. She is now 85 years old. Unfortunately, we graduates of March 1943 to 1948 could not give performances of Shakespeare's dramas. We who graduated in 1948 studied with Miss Lindsey after she and Dr. Hansen came back again in the autumn of the previous year. It was just half a year and we were not proficient enough to give a performance of a Shakespearian play in English because it was all she could do to correct our poor English pronunciation. The students one year behind us performed *As You Like It* the following year. They did their best for Miss Lindsey. In 1950, the students two years behind us performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* It was very well done by the students of the English Department. Music Department students played the ensemble piano music (two pianos, four hands), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mendelssohn. At that time, I was the librarian in the music library who loaned the music to Dr. Hansen and her students. Until now, I often hear the *Wedding March* played from that drama, but the scene and music from that drama I like best is the *Clown Dance.*

Once I watched the television drama, *Macbeth,* in which the scenery, actors and actresses were all in Japanese style. The prophecy of the witches and the blood that could not be washed away made me shudder. In this way, Western ghost dramas often teach us the lesson never to do wrong whether we are being watched by others or not.

I hesitate to admit that I have never seen *kabuki* or *nô* in a theater. And I have not watched them attentively on television because I did not think I could understand the words. I'll watch and listen more carefully next time. I do know and enjoy one *kyôgen,* Tarô Kaja, the clown who bought an umbrella-shaped pine tree and brought it to his master who had given him an ex-

planation about a fan. Tarô Kaja mistook an umbrella for a fan.

In our church, we give dramatic performances at Christmas parties. Last year, I played the part of an old man who was sweeping the snow for he was expecting Jesus to come to his house on that snowy day. I am looking forward to participating in a drama again this year.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

There are may kinds of drama in the various countries throughout the world. Each of them has its own particular character.

I know a few titles of Shakespeare's dramas but I have forgotten their contents. For example, *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet,* etc. Perhaps I read *The Merchant of Venice* in a high school textbook, but I am ashamed to confess that I have no memory of it at all.

I saw *kabuki* a couple of times when I was in Tokyo. It was from "the eighteen best plays of the Ishikawa family of *kabuki" (kabuki jûhachiban,* in Japanese). I was impressed that, even though all of the actors were male, the female parts were performed exactly like females. It is a unique idea to have a revolving stage *(mawari-butai)* set in the center of the platform. The "flower path" *(hanamichi)* which is on the left side of the audience is a passageway for stars to make an entrance or exit. *Kabuki* is one of the traditional classical arts in Japan. The actors speak classical Japanese and their actions are in slow tempo, so it is difficult for foreigners to understand, but rental receivers are available for visitors.

It is difficult for me to compare or contrast Japanese drama with that of the west because I seldom watch western dramas on television.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

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June 14 Message (Subject #262)

In 1951, I graduated from seminary and came to Japan as a missionary. The subject of my graduation thesis was suggested by August Karl Reischauer, the father of the former U. S. ambassador to Japan. Its title was: "A Comparison of 'Salvation' in the Amida Sects of Japanese Buddhism and Christianity". At the end of next week, I am scheduled to give a lecture at a Buddhist university in Nagoya on the subject of Bukkyô no Bunka to Kirisutokyô no Bunka *and I would be happy for listeners to/readers of these messages to assist me by informing me of their impressions of Japanese Buddhism, the theme for essays this week. In your experience or study, from your viewpoint, what is the function of Buddhism in present-day Japan? How has it influenced Japanese thought and life over the years? Do you think Buddhism has changed since it entered Japan? What do you consider significant about Buddhist Culture? Elements of essays on this subject received beforehand may be incorporated into my lecture.*

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I say truly that I do not understand Japanese Buddhism because I cannot read the Buddhist scriptures, or sutras, nor comprehend them. I was surprised when I first read the Bible that I could understand it from the beginning.

Buddhism has greatly influenced Japanese culture until now, but its influence is waning because it is changing, little by little, except for its ceremonies--especially funerals.

Although I am sorry that I cannot make

helpful comments about this theme, it seems certain that many people make use of Buddhism not as a faith but to provide a ceremony for funerals or memorial services at which reading and meaning have little significance.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

When we visit Asian countries such as Korea, China or Thailand, we are impressed with pious Buddhist believers praying at temples. They often kneel, touch their foreheads to the ground and pray earnestly. I recall that there were such sights here and there in our own country some decades ago. What is the reason that Buddhism has lost its power to attract people to the world of faith?

In our society, the term *sôshiki-bukkyô*, or "funeral Buddhism", is often used. This term implies that, at present, Buddhism no longer has significance for the people except for funeral rituals. I have heard that even Buddhist priests themselves admit that they are called upon only for funerals or memorial services. Today, Buddhism has very little influence on society in general and has no appeal to young men. Young people do not even know how to pray to Buddha. The other day I was very surprised to see a boy clapping his hands while praying at a temple. Needless to say, this is the way of praying at a shrine. At a temple, we should pray with our hands pressed together.

Why is this so? Buddhist priests do not make an effort to implant their teaching deep into the minds of young people. We can hardly find any of their daily activities directed toward that purpose. I often have an opportunity to attend a memorial service for the dead at a relative's home. In the first place, I cannot understand the meaning of the sutra. I have often heard recently that a cassette tape of the sutra is used at the service of a young family. I can easily understand their feelings. Moreover, priests' sermons at memorial services do not impress me, though older persons seem to be moved by them. Am I impious or do the priests lack an inquiring mind? The chief priest of my family temple comes to my house once month to chant the ritual before my family altar. But when he is busy with some urgent business, such as a funeral, he often asks a priest of another temple to come instead, without informing us. Is it their principle of give and take? I cannot feel grateful for a strange priest's sutra.

The teachings of Buddha (Shakyamuni) are themselves noble and gracious, imparting profound knowledge. I feel sad that I cannot regard the priests as the medium to convey the noble teaching of Buddha to us. Today, chief priests of temples often manage kindergartens. Originally, this was a part of their missionary work. But now they have acquired a different character, the character of a business. I cannot but think that insufficient monetary offerings by the supporters of the temple has compelled them to involve themselves with these side jobs. I am sad that Buddhism seldom makes a deep impression on us today. **(MIKIHIKO YOSHIMOTO**, Gifu)

As far as I know, the function of Buddhism in present-day Japan is to gain the favor of and to be protected by the Buddha while living in this world. So Buddhists pray for the well-being of their own families, for good health and a prosperous business and devote themselves to their ancestors, setting up Buddhist altars in their homes.

Buddhism has changed since it entered Japan about the sixth century. As Buddhists use many Shintoist rites, Buddhist rites have become showy. For example, on

the hundredth day after a baby is born, the mother takes the baby to visit a shrine *(omiya-mairi,* in Japanese) or on the festal day for children of 3, 5 and 7 years of age *(Shichi-go-san).* These are Shinto rites. I was amazed at a couple who are Buddhist whose wedding ceremony was held in a church before a priest but whose funeral service was according to Buddhist rites. Isn't that strange? Buddhist rites are mixed with Shintoist rites nowadays.

Much Japanese culture owes much to Chinese Buddhism since ancient days. For example, Buddhist medical science (acupuncture, moxa and finger pressure treatments), Buddhist architecture for temples, sculptures of Buddhist images, lacquer for food utensils or furniture, Chinaware, brush drawings with India ink, weaving, art, music, folktales, literature and even the rites in the imperial household. China is such a great nation that we Japanese cannot hold up our heads before the Chinese. (**TAMAKO MORIMOTO**, Tsuyama)

Strangely enough, few people in present-day Japan know and celebrate the birthday of the Buddha, the legendary founder of Buddhism, while too many of them, whether or not they are believers in Christianity, celebrate Christmas, the birthday of Christ. Despite this fact, Buddhist culture permeates Japanese society. Let me illustrate this point.

First, I will mention people's view of life. They describe other people's death as their becoming a *hotoke,* or a buddha. It seems that view definitely presupposes the existence of another world where people are supposed to go after they breathe their last in this world. People give condolences to the bereaved, saying that they pray that the deceased may live a happy life in the world beyond. This very common idea related to people's death comes from one of the basic teachings of Buddhism.

We can see tiny shrines where Jizo-Bosatsu are enshrined here and there in towns as well as villages. People pray for traffic safety in front of the Jizo shrines, firmly believing that the Bosatsu protects them from such evils as traffic accidents. When it comes to safe driving, almost every driver has a lucky charm issued by a Buddhist temple in his or her car.

(**SHOJI SUGIMOTO**, Suginami, Tokyo)

Many Buddhist sects in Japan possess their own distinctive rites. The rites can divided into those that religious practitioners perform among themselves and those conducted on behalf of the laity.

Rites conducted for the laity may be subdivided into rites beseeching the protection of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and heavenly beings for the sake of national security or the good fortune of groups or individuals and rites for the deceased. Since the Edo period (1600-1868), the majority of temples in Japan have emphasized funeral and memorial services, providing the bereaved with a measure of comfort, which the Shintoh religious tradition, due to its treatment of death as defilement, did not.

Annual rites include *Shushô-e,* rites carried out at the New Year, including supplications for peace for the nation and prosperity for the people; *Nehan-e,* rites performed on 15 February in commemoration of the Buddha's death and entry into *parinirvana* or complete extinction; and *Higan-e,* rites conducted on the three days before and after the spring and autumn equinoxes. The original purpose of *Higan-e* was attaining the Way of the Buddha; the word *higan* means the other shore or the Pure Land, and pilgrimages and the recitation of the *nembutsu* were major features. Activities on *higan* today, however, tend to

center on visits to the graves of departed family members to conduct memorial services. *Shushô-e* and *Higan-e* are Buddhist rites unique to Japan. *Shaka Kôtan-e,* or *Bussho-e* (Buddha's birthday), is also known as *Kanbutsu-e* (rite of bathing the Buddha) and popularly as *Hana Matsuri* (Flower Festival); the main practice of this occasion (8 April) consists of sprinkling a figure of the infant Biuddha with sweet tea. During *Urabon-e* (Sanskrit: *Ullambana),* conducted 13-16 July (13-15 August in some localities). the souls of deceased family members are believed to return to the home and family members perform rites to greet them. *Jôdo-e* (feast commemorating the attainment of Buddhahood) ceremonies take place on 8 December, the day when Sakyamuni is said to have attained perfect enlightenment.

The preceding information was quoted from the encyclopedia, *Japan,* published by Kodansha, to help those who read this 46th issue of *"Daily Word" Echoes* and especially for my friends in foreign countries to understand Buddhism. I have introduced it, expecting that other contributors will have written on this theme from different standpoints, in order to give a clear picture of the difference and similarity between Buddhism and foreign religions. It may be a good chance to make a better evaluation than I have been able to give. "Nothing so good but it might have been better." **(JAIME IWAI,** Owariasahi)

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<u>June 21 Message (Subject #264)</u>

In the United States and Europe some men and women wear a covering for their head. There are different words for these hats or caps, depending on their size and shape. Some hats have brims and many caps have a visor. Frenchmen often wear a beret, Turks prefer a fez and Mexicans wear sombreros. Englishmen may wear a bowler or a derby while many American men would choose a fedora. I am not acquainted with the names of the various kinds of bonnets or hats that ladies wear, but in the West some old-fashioned gentlemen and some fashionable women would not feel comfortable going out without a hat. An American businesswoman has written the following advertising blurb about hats. "A hat is the difference between wearing clothes and wearing a costume; it's the difference between being dressed and being dressed up; it's the difference between looking adequate and looking your best." What do you think about hats, caps or bonnets? Do you ever wear one? Have you ever worn one? Why do we see so few Japanese people wearing hats?

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Through Dr. Offner's message concerning hats, caps, etc., I noticed that there are many Western words to translate our word, *bôshi,* besides the above-mentioned basic words. When I learned English for the first time in my middle-school days, I was puzzled to find out that there were two different words, "hat" and "cap", which corresponded to our *bôshi* and wondered why it was so. Consulting an English dictionary this time to learn more about *bôshi,* I found a general term "headgear" which covers every kind of *bôshi* Headgear with a brim is a hat and headgear with a visor is a cap. A beret or fedora is also a kind of headgear. When we hear the word "sombrero", we imagine a broad-brimmed hat used in Spain or Mexico. (By the way, *sombra*

means shade in Spanish.) But I think *sombrero* is a most ordinary, not a particular, word in these countries judging from the fact that there are no other basic words for "hat" in a Spanish dictionary.

Why is our Japanese language lacking in words for headgear? My reasoning is as follows: Originally, the Japanese, regardless of class, did not have the custom of wearing headgear. Samurai wore their hair in a knot; tradesmen and farmers covered their heads with a towel if necessary. (When people set out on a journey, they wore a *suge-gasa*, or a sedge hat, but that was an exception.) On the other hand, Westerners have had the custom of wearing many kinds of headgear from of old. It is a universal truth that people have an abundant vocabulary in areas closely connected with their daily lives. For example, as the Japanese are an agricultural people, our vocabulary is very detailed in regard to the kinds of rain or the shapes of clouds. On the other hand, meat-eating people classify many kinds of meat into small groups. When we introduced the habit of hearing headgear at the beginning of the Meiji era, we borrowed the Chinese character *bôshi* to identify them.

In former days (from the Meiji era to the end of the war), people, especially high-bred persons, often wore hats, following the example of foreigners who had entered our country. Probably, it was because they thought the custom was fashionable or dandyish. Old pictures of my deceased father show that he wore a hat when he was young. He also had a mustache. Later, mother told us that the real reason was to hide his bald head.

These days, Japanese people seldom wear a hat or other kind of headgear. I think it is also a fashion of the times. Passing through the age of admiration of the West, people seem to have begun to go their own way. The reason why they could change the custom is that, originally, they had no custom of wearing headgear. In my middle-school days, we were compelled to wear a regulation cap together with a uniform. Today, many schools do not force students to obey such rules. We Japanese are not naturally attached to hats or caps.

(MIKIHIKO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I do not know much about hats, bonnets and so on. I have worn several kinds of them in previous years to enhance my appearance, but I do not wear them now because I think they are too troublesome. A straw hat, which is called *mugiwara-bôshi* in Japanese, has been used on sunny days both in fields and along the seaside from long ago--not for appearance sake, but out of necessity. Peasants, fishermen and outdoor workers wear it even now. In the old days, we did not wear hats because the traditional Japanese dress was kimono and we did not wear a hat with a kimono. In the old days, women of high classes used *katsugi*, which is a kind of veil to avoid being seen by others.

The history of Western style dress is brief in our country. We do not have an accurate sense about Western styles. We are learning now, but we have only a limited knowledge about what is acceptable or unacceptable regarding a few Western customs. Japanese customs continue from our ancestors and change little by chance. I think that, after a thousand years, Japanese will become more adept at dressing up and wearing hats than they are now.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Thank you very much for informing us of the kinds of hats worn by people of different nations. When we first learned the words "hat" and "cap", I thought that the former had brims and the latter did not,

but now I realize that caps have visors to keep the sun out of our eyes when we exercise outdoors. I also learned that the Turkish fez and the French beret are kinds of caps and the Mexican sombrero and English derby or bowler are kinds of hats with a high crown. A beret is usually worn by a woman, but a male artist sometimes wears one also. I saw the bonnets worn by ladies and children in the American television drama, "The Little House on the Prairie." They looked very nice wearing bonnets which were tied under their chins. Since the Meiji era, some Japanese people have been wearing hats or caps like Americans.

When I first saw Americans keep their hats on even when they were in a room, I thought it was strange because we had been taught to take off our hats when entering a room or when meeting teachers or others older than ourselves. Later, I came to recognize the difference between the customs of Japanese and Westerners.

In the winter, Dr. Kate Hansen used to wear a cap that looked like a fez without a tassel and Miss Lydia Lindsey used to wear a cap that looked like a bowl. They usually wore no caps or hats in summer, but when they dressed up, they wore hats decorated with ribbons and feathers. When they came to Japan for the first time at the end of the Meiji era, Miyagi Jogakkô teachers wearing crested *haori* went to Yokohama to receive those two American missionaries. They were surprised to see these two ladies in elegant dresses and gorgeous hats. I heard that those teachers felt as if two angels had come down to earth. Those dresses and hats that Dr. Hansen and Miss Lindsey wore were kept as mementoes in Miyagi Jogakkô (now called Miyagi Gakuin) until the main school building was destroyed in an air raid on Sendai in 1945.

I like to wear hats and caps. When I am out, I wear a woolen cap in winter and a telescopic hat in spring, summer and autumn. However, I often leave it at church or at my friends' homes. I would like to have a good hat to keep on my head all the time as Americans do. I am sure many Japanese people leave their hats at places they go because they take them off so frequently. That's the reason why you see so few Japanese people wearing hats.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

Hats, caps or bonnets are important articles of clothing from adults to infants. All of them are beneficial. Hats protect our heads from cold in the winter and from heat, sunburn or sunstroke in the summer. Especially, bald-headed persons had better wear hats, caps or bonnets. I do not know why bonnets are not seen anywhere recently. I know only one rule of etiquette relating to hats. It is not allowed to wear a hat in the house, but wearing caps or bonnets is permitted. I get upset when my hair becomes disheveled after taking off my hat.

As hats are a part of one's dress, they should be suited to our dress. I often wear a black felt hat in winter or an off-white cloth hat in summer when I go shopping downtown or to a supermarket. I also wore a beret when attending school 70 years ago.

In my opinion, to be brief, the history of hats, caps or bonnets is shorter in Japan than in Western countries. About a hundred years ago, warriors in Japan wore a topknot *(chon-mage)* and many women had their hair dressed in Japanese style, wearing a kimono. After the end of the Second World War, Japanese hairstyle and dress changed to Western style but there are still many people in Japan who do not want to wear hats or caps. For example: Buddhist priests *(bongo)*, classical dancers *(maiko)*, traditional entertainers *(geisha)*, or teachers of tea ceremony, and so on.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

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June 28 Message (Subject #265)

The suggested theme for an essay is: Newspapers. Do you read a newspaper every day? Do you ever read more than one? Do you ever change your subscription to a different one? Why or why not? Do you perceive a difference in the viewpoint of different newspapers? Which pages of the newspaper are you especially interested in? Are there special columns or features that you particularly enjoy reading? Have you ever written to or for a newspaper? Do you have any suggestions regarding how newspapers may be improved?

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I read three newspapers every day: the *Asahi, Chûnichi* and *Nikkei (Nihon Keizai Shinbun).* I read the *Asahi* for social and political news, the *Chûnichi* for news about Nagoya City or Aichi prefecture because it reports on local matters. The *Nikkei,* of course, has detailed articles related to the economy. I do not read about the economy. Rather, I read essays related to literature, comments about art, etc. In my estimation, the comments in this newspaper are on a higher level than in others. I am deeply impressed with the intellectual level of its articles and consider it a top-class newspaper.

I have occasionally sent in my ideas which were printed in the newspaper and I received a book coupon as a gratuity. I had a chance to go through the *Chûnichi* newspaper plant three years ago. It had been improved beyond my imagination.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

The typical mass media at present are newspapers and radio and television broadcasts. Newspapers and broadcasting have their own respective strengths and weaknesses. There is an old joke in this regard: "We can wrap our lunch in a newspaper but not in a radio." As for broadcasting, television is much more popular than radio today. (I listen to the radio only when I drive a car.) Television transmits information much quicker than newspapers--almost immediately. Visual images on television have a stronger appeal than newspaper articles, as we experienced during the Gulf War. Educational programs for language study on television are much more useful than radio programs for me. Nevertheless, newspapers have not lost their reason for being, owing to their various merits.

Japan's diffusion rate of newspapers (566 per1000 persons in 1991) is the highest in the world, followed by the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States in that order. It is said that this high rate is due mainly to the high literacy rate. (By the way, in the field of television, the U. S. is on top, followed by Japan, Canada and the U. K.) The tendency to show preference for newspapers is gradually changing nowadays. The most important reason for this is a steep rise in labor costs. The delivery service of newspapers is going out of date even in our country,where labor costs were rather low and labor itself was considered a virtue. The other day, I heard the story of a newly-married couple who did not subscribe to a newspaper. They watch news on television and the husband faxes the TV program section of a newspaper to his wife at home as soon as he arrives at his office. Recently, a new kind of mass media, called "facsimile (fax) newspaper" has appeared. It is a service business which sends information in a particular field to contractors by way of facsimile. The ap-

pearance of special newspapers focussing on sports and entertainment news must be meeting the needs of the times.

I subscribe to the *Chûnichi Shinbun* at home and read other daily newspapers at the office. I read the political and financial columns and news of international affairs most carefully. I am not so interested in news reports of traffic accidents or murders and my wife often points out my indifference toward such things. Sports news does not arouse my interest very much. I have always felt that it is wasteful to use so much space to report the results of professional baseball games of the previous day. The recent soccer boom has accelerated this tendency. The one exception in my indifference to sports is sumo. Therefore, using much space for sumo does not cause a problem for me, though I know well that it is selfish of me to say such a thing. Once, for a while, I subscribed to an English newspaper, but I did not continue for long because it took a week to read a portion for one day. Today, I sometimes buy a copy at a station, etc. as occasion demands at a time, for example when I wish to know a technical term necessary to compose an essay for this periodical. (**MIKIHIKO YOSHIMOTO**, Gifu)

Now my family takes three newspapers: the *Asahi*, *The Asahi Evening News* and the *Asahi* for Elementary School Children. The last paper, as its name suggests, is for our children, especially for Megumi. There seems to be little she usually reads, however, except for the comic strips. I hope she will learn to read some articles or columns on a regular basis, but she does not seem to have found one yet that interests her.

The *Asahi* is my family's main newspaper. My wife and I rely on it for accurate information as well as for enjoyment. We read the editorials every day to know what the *Asahi* editorial staff thinks about certain issues. So far, we have been quite happy with them. I especially read the serial editorials on the United States and Japan fifty years after the last war. Stimulated by some of these editorials, I referred to other reference books.

As for enjoyment, I like "Women", or *Onna*, by Endô Shûsaku and "Cleopatra", by Miyao Tomiko. They are not only enjoyable but informative as well. As I was reading about Oda Nobunaga in *Onna*, I listened to the "Daily Word" message on Nobunaga with great interest.

Last of all, let me mention *The Asahi Evening News*, one of the English newspapers published in Japan. I read this newspaper for information and some articles are very useful for "Foreign Affairs", one of the peculiar subjects of the International Division at Chigusa High School. In this class, both my students and I are expected to deepen our understanding of various topics in English as well as in Japanese. Therefore, I usually try to collect as much information as possible and *The Asahi Evening News* is one of the most important resources.

I used to think the newspaper was free of prejudice, but these days I have found it important to consider it but one of many sources of information and to realize it cannot be completely free of the biases of its writers. Look at the foreign news, for example. The news does not cover all countries of the world. The few countries dealt with are not always in accord with the interest of the readers. Those countries are chosen on the basis of the interest of the reporters. It is true that many of the articles I read in the *Asahi* and *The Asahi Evening News* are interesting enough, but now I think it is very important for the readers of these newspapers to recognize that they

simply represent some opinions and do not necessarily present the "best" opinion.

These comments on newspapers may be strange to those who do not know what the Japanese system of education is like, but to many Japanese who have been told to copy what is written in a textbook or what their teachers say, it must be very familiar. We tend to think of what we read in the newspaper as absolute truth, but this is not the case, as I have pointed out above In my "Foreign Affairs" class, therefore, I hope to encourage my students to read newspaper articles critically and to make use of them to form their own opinions.

(**TOMOYASU KIMURA**, Nishi, Nagoya)

Usually I read a newspaper every day, but I often fail to read one when I am too busy doing housework. The principal newspapers where we live do not have both morning and evening papers but only morning editions. A local evening paper which is a smaller size and only four pages is delivered daily except Sunday.

I am especially interested in the *Vox Populi,* "Voice" and *Kata-ekubo* ("A Dimple on One Cheek", a short comment or joke about current society) columns. They give me some food for thought regarding recent social conditions in Japan and in the world.

I have never written to a newspaper, but I enjoy reading various kinds of news, except for sports and stock market reports. I suggest that many kinds of advertisements take up too much space and that the *Asahi* newspaper is gradually losing its dignity.

(**TAMAKO MORIMOTO**, Tsuyama)

In my childhood home, my father subscribed to two newspapers: one was the leading national paper; the other was a local paper. When I started my new home, I followed my father's example because I thought it was advisable to subscribe to two kinds of newspapers. Later, however, I added another, English-language paper, to these two. Sometimes, when going out, I get other newspapers from a newsstand at railway stations.

I usually read papers after breakfast and supper. I am especially interested in the readers' forum of each paper. I try to choose which opinion is the most appealing to me in terms of what the writer means or in its cogency. This process helps me read more deeply than ever. When I do so, I find satisfaction in reading newspapers.

My secondary interest is in a column written by a special writer of each paper. The column deals with a variety of problems, from the current political scene to a compassionate story about some obscure people. More often than not it offers valuable food for thought.

Finally, I had better offer my opinion about what newspapers should be like from now on. They should offer common people more space to actively discuss issues of importance from opposite points of view. Now newspapers are facing keen competition among themselves, mainly to increase their circulation. Instead, I keenly hope that they will compete in terms of quality. Active discussions among the readers, analyses in perspective and clarifying one's standpoint without fear or favor. These are three key concepts related to quality.

(**SHOJI SUGIMOTO**, Suginami, Tokyo)

"Hearing good news from a distant land is like a drink of cold water when you are dry and thirsty." (Proverbs 25:25)

"The news about Jesus spread all the more widely, and crowds of people came to hear him and be healed from their diseases." (Luke 5:15)

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"Echoes" of Other Messages

July 1 Message Excerpt:

Japan's konnyaku industry is developing new products from this calorie-free starchy food for export. Konnyaku has been produced in Japan for a long time, but how does one explain what konnyaku is to a foreigner? One Japanese-English dictionary simply gives a transliteration which is not particularly helpful. A bigger dictionary gives a more complete translation: a paste made from the starch of devil's tongue. In an unabridged dictionary, "devil's tongue" was defined as "a foul-smelling somewhat fleshy tropical bulbous herb . . . that is sometimes grown in the greenhouse for its large leaves and showy dark red spathe surrounding a long spadix." Since I do not know what a spathe or a spadix is, it required still further research to understand the meaning. Although I have enjoyed eating konnyaku, I would rather not have to explain what it is.

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Konnyaku is a bulbous perennial plant which originally came from India. It has been cultivated in Japan since ancient times. *Konnyaku* bulbs sprout up from under the ground about the time when all rice planting has been completed or when chestnut blossoms begin to open. Bulbs which are over three years old are good for making *konnyaku.* The bulb is dug up, washed, sliced and mixed with water in which a little caustic soda has been dissolved and molded into blocks. After being boiled for about 15 minutes, it is done. Before being eaten, however, it is better to boil it again.

There are a number of reasons why *konnyaku* is beneficial for one's health. For example, it is good for intestinal disorders and as a preventative against cancer of the colon. As it is 80 percent water, it has low nutritional value and thus is good for those on a diet. In recipes, it may be used as a starch. I do not know whether or not it has fiber or is difficult to digest.

Konnyaku bulbs which are sliced, ground into powder and dried may be kept for a long time. I was surprised and disappointed to find that *konnyaku* powder *(seiko,* in Japanese) is imported from other countries (whose names I do not know) because I had believed that *konnyaku* was a special Japanese food. I tried to make *konnyaku* quite long ago in Tsuyama. *Konnyaku* plants are now growing in our garden, but they will killed by the frost in November. The bulbs will remain underground till next spring.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

For this 46th issue of *"Daily Word" Echoes,* twelve individuals contributed 36 essays. Ten of the essays were on the first theme suggested--which was the theme of our meeting on May 29th. It requires time, effort and thought to compose an essay in English, but those who have the ability, take the time and put forth the effort gain some satisfaction and benefit from reading the corrected version in this periodical. I hope they also are stimulated to submit essays in the future also. I also look forward to receiving essays from new contributors and from "old timers"who have been slacking off. *"Daily Word" Echoes* provides benefit to the writer, the reader and the editor alike. (C.D.)