

"Daily Word" Echoes

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(Essays submitted by listeners/readers on themes of "Daily Word" messages between April 2 and May 7, 1996. Corrected and edited by Clark Offner.)

April 2 Message (Subject #302)

Today's theme is the Japanese system of education. What do you think about it? What are its strengths and weaknesses and how has it changed since the end of the war?

The educational system of our country basically consists of 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of middle school, 3 years of high school and 4 years of university. This system was set up under the direction of the U. S. Occupation Forces after World War II. The first 9 years of education (elementary school and middle school) are compulsory. Therefore, for these 9 years, the rate of school attendance by children is 100%. While not compulsory, high school enrollment is over 90% nationwide and nearly 100% in the cities. Over 30% of all high school graduates go on to university or college, which is low only in comparison to the 50% figure of the U. S. (This data is a little old.)

In the Meiji era, as Japan began undergoing modernization, the government established an integrated educational system from elementary school to university in order to foster the development of industry and culture through the introduction of Western learning. In

1900, children were obliged to begin 4 years of compulsory education from age 6. That year, the percentage of children attending school was 90%. In 1907, when compulsory education was increased to 6 years, the percentage was about 99%. After that, many elementary schools, middle schools, girls' high schools, vocational schools, colleges and universities were founded. Except for elementary schools, however, applicants had to be selected for entrance into these schools so the proportion of students continuing on to higher levels of education was not high. In 1935, the percentage of elementary school students going on to the secondary schools of that time (middle schools, girls' high schools and vocational schools) was 18.5%, and the percentage going on to higher education (higher school, college, university) was only 3%.

As I have often written in this periodical before, I entered middle school the final year of the war. As my elementary school was in a remote farming village (where I had been evacuated from Tokyo the preceding year), only 2 boys and a girl (from among 40 graduates) entered middle school or girls' high school. The other boys and girls went out into the world at the age of 12; with the exception of some who entered a higher elementary school (called *kôtô shôgakkô*) for 2 years. My wife's mother, who died 8 years ago, was very proud of having been graduated from a girls' high school under the former system. It is generally recognized that girls' high

school was the highest institution of learning for girls and the comparative value of the school graduation was much higher than that of the universities of these days as mentioned above.

Today, our country's education system faces many difficult problems such as an over-emphasis on entrance examinations, enhanced moral education, countering delinquency, upgrading teachers' qualifications and so on. While agreeing that the American-style education contributed to Japan's postwar development many people feel this is a good time for retrospection and a reconsideration now that half a century has passed since the introduction of the "new" educational system. (MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

When Japan opened her ports to foreign countries, she was considered a nation of virtue in the Orient. After the war, she was once criticized as an economic animal. Now, Japan is seriously ill. Why are so many shameful events reported every day? Where has Japanese virtue gone? I think our present condition is a result of postwar education in Japan.

There is a story of a large number of wild rats simultaneously dashing to the seashore and jumping into the water to their death, one after another. I think this story gives a hint regarding our Japanese situation. "Even if the traffic signal is red, if we cross the street in a group, we're safe." This saying exactly expresses our traditional Japanese weak point: an extreme group consciousness. After the war, it became stronger and we Japanese tend to think we will always be safe if we follow others. But, sometimes, we must make our own decisions.

Now, Japan is in an unprecedented recession. The famous Japanese lifelong employment and security systems have collapsed. Many new university graduates cannot find jobs. Teachers should recognize that the age of concentrating

only on test scores is over. I am looking forward to a coming new age of Japanese students who have developed individual opinions and morals with the help of new teachers.

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

I do not think that the present Japanese education system itself has any weakness. I admit, however, that Japanese have changed their thinking about education. Why do Japanese students want to enter a famous school, college or university? Almost all students study hard to pass entrance examinations. Why do they not have a desire for knowledge after they gain entrance? Recently, there are entrance examinations from kindergarten to university. The present situation is the result of mistaken ideas, but I cannot say what they are.

I will mention my feeling during a trip to Holland where we had some unhurried time and were able to talk to a few persons we had met somewhere. I remember one of them talked about education. He said that he did not want to go to college after he graduated from high school. He said that most people thought the same way as he did. They have no difficulties and spend happy and peaceful days all their lives. Only special people graduate from university or college. I saw in his smile that he did not envy them.

I think that the present situation in Japan was caused by the general public. I myself am becoming uninterested. Now, I am reflecting on my conduct as a result of thinking about this theme.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Since I have been involved in the education system of Japan for the past 18 years, there are many things I would like to write, but here I will mention one clear difference between the education of Japan and that of England.

It was back in 1981 that I went to a British university for the first time. It was Manchester University. For the first few months, I was not sure how to study, so I tried to do my best in the same way I did in a Japanese university. I listened to lectures as carefully as possible and did all I could do to grasp the main point of each class. In Japan, I had been expected to write as exactly as possible what I learned during the class when it came to exams, so I did that at Manchester University. To my surprise, however, I didn't get as good results as I had expected. So after the exams I went to my teachers who all said they would not give a good mark on a test paper only full of notes taken during the class. It was then that I began to recognize the importance of thinking on my own.

Since I came back to Japan, I have been teaching English so as to give my students as many chances as possible to think of their own ideas or to express themselves in their own ways. In recent months, however, I've found many of them are still not used to teaching which is meant to encourage their creative thinking. It may be because they have been forced to imitate their teachers even when it comes to thinking. They seem to be afraid of making a mistake by thinking on their own. As far as writing English is concerned, this is true even with English teachers as well.

It is easy to point out "weaknesses" of our education system but it is difficult to make use of those "weaknesses" to improve the system. And this is exactly what I am determined to do from now on. It is true that many Japanese have been poor at creative thinking, but their diligence has helped them master the basics of any subject. Independent thinking is important, but it can't get us somewhere unless we have mastered the basics, so I would like to lead my students in the right direction by encouraging them to work diligently and leaving

them as much room as possible for their creative thinking.

Last of all, I want to express my gratitude for the "Daily Word" messages, most of which have given me much food for thought.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

After the war, Japanese compulsory education was changed to include six years of elementary school and three years of junior high school. Even though the education period has been extended, human education has failed. We live in material abundance and have become financially well off. On the other hand, children's hearts have become poorer.

A very important problem for educators is how to restore spiritual vitality to their students. Teasing, suicides and cruelty related to the examination wars arise from poor spirits. Most children cannot play with a group of friends nor get along easily with nature.

There are defects in the basic education policy. For example, religious training, patriotism and respect for traditional culture are not included in the curriculum. Sympathy for others, modesty, gratitude and respect all come from a spirit of independence and self-control. I think there is a great need for educational reformation.

Yesterday, I read some interesting comments in the *Asahi* newspaper. A cartoonist, Kei Ishizaka, said that children should have many opportunities to enjoy themselves in order to enjoy human life and have good experiences in the future. Another person, Sakane Yonekura, said that school is not a place where grades should be emphasized or where distinctions should be made between students. What does it mean to be first class? It is a process. School courses, school records and achievements test scores have no relation to character. I thought their opinions were very interesting.

(MIEKO OKUMURA, Mizuho, Nagoya)

Today, shameful incidents are occurring in many fields of government, medical groups, banks, religious bodies, and so on. What is the reason? All of these incidents seem to have a common origin—the lack of moral education.

The other day I read an essay titled "Today's Young Men" written by Professor Tsuneo Iida in the *Chûnichi* newspaper. He deplored the blameworthy attitude of students in lecture halls who noisily talk about their private matters, ignoring the sincere efforts of the lecturers. It reminded me of my own experience during my student days in the transition period from the prewar educational system to that of the postwar era. The classroom was filled with students from both systems and I was a student from the prewar system. The lecture was on accounting and students from the postwar system were very noisily absorbed in their personal conversations from the very beginning. The aged professor became angry and scolded them in a loud voice at last. His attitude was quite natural and we all sympathized with him.

When I read the essay written by Professor Iida, I thought that the detestable atmosphere common in classrooms in my school days may have continued without improvement until now. Those impolite students have grown up since those days and some have become leaders in many areas of Japanese society.

A few days ago, I happened to hear an NHK radio news report that English courses will be introduced into grade schools for the first time. Listening to the news, I was instantly against the idea. I thought that a course in morality, which was included in the prewar education system should be introduced into grade schools before an English course, even though that is my favorite language.

(HARUJI FUMIO, Minami, Nagoya)

"Wisdom is more valuable than jewels". (Prove 3:15)

At the recent meeting of "Daily Word" Fans which I attended and enjoyed for the first time, many people emphasized the need for moral education. I fully agree that this is one of the most important elements in education. However, in this short essay, I would like to focus on another aspect.

Japanese education overemphasizes rote memorization. In my high school days, history was completely reduced to just memorization. I didn't think about the people, their way of thinking and so forth. I gained knowledge but not understanding. And now I have lost most of that knowledge. It is very important to think deeply about and discuss historical events, for example. In science, we must deal with actual objects rather than learning just from textbooks.

One way to solve this problem is to reduce the range of subjects or of one particular subject. To master a foreign language requires great effort. Some students are not good at learning words by heart. In high school, all students should not be forced to take English. The important thing is not what to learn but how to learn.

(TOSHIYUKI KOTERAZAWA, Kasugai)

The new educational system after the war shifted the emphasis from rote learning and indoctrination to thinking for oneself as a member of a democratic society. Textbooks were completely revised to eliminate militaristic and nationalistic propaganda and the old course on ethics, or *shûshin*, which was thought to have been the core of prewar education, was replaced by new courses in the social sciences.

Elementary education had been egalitarian from the beginning but an effort was made to reduce the elitist flavor of higher levels of education and to shift from what the Japanese people called the 6-5-3-3 school system to the American 6-3-3-4 system. The sudden

rise in the number of universities—and the great increase in students attending higher levels of education resulted in a substantial lowering of university standards. All this was deeply resented by many Japanese.

The present examination structure which resulted threw the educational system into disorder. An entrance exam for junior high schools plays a key role in the present educational system. Since elementary school children are forced to study hard, without having a concrete goal or target in the future, they lose interest in learning before long and when it comes time to enter universities, they become extremely tired and no longer continue to study.

In America, university students or postgraduates study very hard because they have a concrete object or aim in mind. The problem with the Japanese educational system lies not only in the examination structure but also in the time when decisions must be made, which is too early. It will be necessary in the near future to make provision for another try at learning after graduation.

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

The education system of Japan consists of six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, three years of senior high school and four years of university. This system was set up under the direction of the U. S. Occupation Forces after World War II.

My first son was born in 1948 and the second one in 1951. Their children are going to school now. Though I do not live with my grandchildren, I think I can delineate how the Japanese education system has changed since the end of the war, especially in regard to the examination fever in Tokyo, by comparing the cases of those two generations.

When my sons were schoolboys, Japan was not so affluent as today. Though we led a more frugal life, we

could enjoy a closer relationship with nature even in Tokyo. They could play outdoors until it got dark. I believe they were able to enjoy a happier childhood than their children. I do not deny that the entrance examination for senior high school was not easy. Tokyo was divided into regions, each of which had about eight or nine metropolitan senior high schools of various ranks. Students could choose any school within the region, depending on the results of their achievement tests given at the school. When their choice was appropriate, the examination was not so difficult.

Even then, examination fever was criticized. To reduce the competition, the Tokyo Board of Education divided Tokyo into smaller regions, each of which had only a few high schools, to make the schools equal. Contrary to their expectation, people turned away from metropolitan high schools, though there were quite a few of them, some of which were prestigious.

Instead of metropolitan high schools, which had lost their attraction, parents began sending their children to national or private schools, which were quite limited in number, as early as possible. As a result, the examination fever escalated more and more. The Board of Education came to realize the adverse effect of their policy, contrary to their expectation, and quite recently made attempts to remedy the situation, but it was too late.

My granddaughter began attending a supplementary school a few years ago. She is now in the sixth grade and goes to that school four evenings a week, taking a lunch. Concerned about her health and stress, I advised her parents against it, but their answer was just that she was willing to go. In urban districts, the number of children has remarkably decreased. She has few schoolmates to play with. I pity her in that situation and just pray for her healthy growth.

The strength of the Japanese education system rests on its raising the educational level of the general public. We used to have a great gap between urban and rural residents, between the rich and the poor. As Japan has grown richer, educational facilities have become very good all over the country. Compared with us old people, even children have amazing knowledge. I recall a parable in Luke 24. Most of us do not have many talents, but there is strength in numbers. If each of us tries to make much use of the one talent given us, we can have great power.

Japan has changed so drastically that we fear we have not found an appropriate way to face the new environment. In the field of education too, we have a serious problem to grapple with. Surveys indicate that in most Western countries, children in need or in trouble first go to their mothers for help or advice, while in Japan, children tend to rely on their friends in such cases. How disappointed we were to hear that! We should not be offended but try to restore more friendly relationships with them, shouldn't we? What word of wisdom can we give them in their need? What example to follow can we show them? Though the steps we take may be small, we should work hard for the betterment of others as long as we live. We should hope for and try to ensure a better and brighter future for young people, though we have many problems to be solved.

(MICHIKO KAYAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

The Japanese school system of 6-3-3-4 was patterned after the American one after the Second World War. I don't think that this system itself is bad. However, the existing system is impaired by entrance examinations. Students tend to study only subjects that are needed for entrance exams. As a result, Japanese history is neglected and has become an optional subject. So students don't have to study the history of their own country

I think this is one of the worst aspects of the present school education system. Without the study of Japanese history, how can Japanese students know about their own ancestors? They don't know where their ancestors came from, what kind of people they were, what they did to make their living, what kind of culture they had, how they established their state, how they influenced other countries or how they were influenced by them, their place in present world history and so on. If they don't know their ancestors, they don't know themselves. They have no identity. They are like nobodies or floating leaves that have no roots.

A poll of the feelings of Japanese toward Koreans and of Koreans toward Japanese was conducted several months ago which made clear that there was a great gap between these two countries. Young Koreans who have studied the historical relationship between Korea and Japan have negative feelings toward Japanese, while their Japanese counterparts have positive ones toward Koreans. Young Japanese have no knowledge about how the Japanese government treated Koreans under its control and the heavy burdens it imposed on them. On the other hand, young Koreans have learned this in school and have heard about it from their families. People on the two sides have a totally different perception of the past that was common to them. This discrepancy prevents them from understanding each other, accepting each other and building up a good relationship.

We must not forget failures we made in the past or else we will repeat them in the future. I agree one hundred percent with the statement former German President Weizsacker made in his world-famous speech delivered in the German Parliament on the 40th anniversary of the end of World War II.

I think those who don't know the past concentrate on the present and can-

not create a good future. So education without the study of history is deficient and dangerous. I maintain that every young person should study the history of his or her own country. Japanese history should be a mandatory subject in the curriculum of every school in Japan.

(NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

A series of suicides by middle school students points up the failure of education in Japan since the end of World War II. It is high time for Japanese education to be reformed in every aspect, including the 6-3-3 school system. It is a great wonder the current system has survived so many social changes throughout half a century.

The present universal education system is full of problems which require solutions. The rote learning of scraps of information which is prevalent among students for the entrance examinations for college kills the thinking power of the next generation which education should foster. Social acceptance by classmates is an obsession with students who are not so interested in studying. These are mere tips of icebergs. The problems are caused, to a large extent, by the education system itself.

The 6-3-3 school system is entered at the age of six and continues for a dozen years. So far, so good. I understand the initial system which began in the early Meiji era, in the 1870s, was 4-4-4 instead of 6-3-3. I prefer 4-4-4 because 4-4-4, standing for elementary, secondary and high levels respectively, is more suitable for the growth of young students in my view. After four years of schooling from the age of six, students reach the age of ten when the most basic qualities of each individual are generally established and they are prepared for the next stage of education. Only this first elementary stage should be compulsory. In the four years of the next, secondary stage, students should be able

to take courses they choose. They are expected to become competent in basic literacy and mathematics. Then comes the next stage of high school which should include a variety of specialty courses society needs. This should be the last stage for most students. Only those students gifted in some specialty should advance to more advanced stages such as college or university.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

Basically, I am thankful for today's Japanese educational system by which everyone can get compulsory education without having to be concerned about the expense. Owing to that system, everyone can read, write and make calculations, so-called *yomi, kaki, soroban*. And anyone who wants to study more can take an entrance examination to enter a high school and a university. All students have an equal chance to do so. But Japanese society places an excessive value on academic background. Parents force their children to study too hard to pass difficult entrance exams. Accordingly, children are pushed to get more knowledge to pass the exams regardless of their ability.

But the original meaning of education is to "pull out" their ability, so I really hope that they have more chances to think more deeply about something through discussing, debating and observing, at least on the level of compulsory education. I feel like children at school are only taught many things and study little. (MICHIKO NIWA, Shōwa, Nagoya)

April 9 Message (Subject #303)

In Japan, a new school year has begun. These days in the morning, we may see groups of young children walk-

ing together to school. The elementary school children all have a bag strapped to their backs in which are items needed in school. In Japanese, these bags are called *randoseru* and, in recent years, a number of varieties have become available. Minor differences in size, shape, color, material and brand names may be noticed by keen observers. Throughout my school days and those of my children, such convenient school bags whether strapped to backs, hung from shoulders or carried in hands, were never used. The word *randoseru* comes from a Dutch word meaning "back bag". The English word for this bag is "knapsack", which begins with a *k* and is derived from German. Mountain climbers may call their back bags "rucksacks". You may have some thoughts or memories relating to knapsacks.

I remember when I entered elementary school I had a very fine black leather *randoseru* which was given to me by my grandfather, but it was not large enough for all my books so I did not use it for a very long time. If I had it now, I would use it because a back bag is very convenient when I am using both hands. I also had a rucksack which I used for picnics, *orensoku* in Japanese.

Recently, knapsacks are being used not only by young children but increasingly by older people also. They are very practical and safe when we need to use both hands. I teach junior high school children. They have knapsacks also and ride their bicycles easily.

"Where is my *randoseru* gone?" I may sing a song to the same melody as "Where have all the flowers gone?" My black *randoseru* is gone, but the memory remains in my mind forever.

(MICHIKO SAKO, Minami, H. J. J.)

As Dr. Offner noted, a new knapsack (*randoseru*) is a characteristic sign of springtime, along with pretty cherry blossoms. I consulted a dictionary for the first time to learn the origin of the word *randoseru* and found that it comes from a Dutch word *ransel*. Making a passing reference to the English word "knapsack", this word also comes from a combination of two Dutch words, *knappen* (eat) and *zak* (sack), though I do not understand why the word is connected with eating.

As a man gets on in years, he may have vivid memories of his past life. As I mentioned before, I remember quite clearly the time when I entered an elementary school in Tokyo. One thing I remember most vividly is the weight of the knapsack I carried on my back for the first time. Usually, Japanese boys and girls use one and the same knapsack through all six years of their elementary school days. Therefore, when they are first graders, the weight of the knapsack feels heavy on their shoulders. On the contrary, when they become sixth graders, the knapsack looks very small compared to their larger bodies, something like a cicada clinging to a tree. Pupils carry several kinds of textbooks, notebooks and other stationery items corresponding to their class schedule for that day. As the textbooks and other items are used also at their homes, they cannot leave them behind at school. I have often heard, and Dr. Offner also mentioned in his message, that in America pupils do not use knapsacks as in Japan. I wonder how they manage to study both at school and home without carrying them.

Knapsacks on the backs of school children are very colorful. Generally, boys carry black ones and girls red ones, but their size and shape are almost the same. As is often noted, Japanese hate to be different from others. Therefore, knapsack uniformity as mentioned above has few exceptions. It is parents' or

grandparents' great pleasure to buy a new knapsack for their children or grandchildren and to see them going to school. Our granddaughter will enter an elementary school next year. Perhaps we will buy a knapsack and present it to her as a congratulatory gift.

These days, many young people carry a bag like a rucksack (which comes from German) on their backs. In former days, a rucksack was used only for an excursion or mountain climbing. Therefore, at first, I thought they looked very childish. They reminded me of school children's knapsacks. But when I thought about the fashion more deeply, I realized it was very reasonable. It is very safe because one can always use both hands for any purpose. I think we, the aged, should follow the fashion on our own initiative. Young people carrying the bag, however, should be careful in public conveyances to avoid causing trouble to others because of the bag.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

When I was a boy, I lived in a remote country area in Kyoto Prefecture. Then, all pupils wore kimonos and straw sandals. We never saw knapsacks in those days. We packed school goods in a cloth wrapper and went to school. Female teachers wore kimonos, long, violet Japanese skirts, *tabi* (Japanese-style socks) and wooden clogs. They also carried items in a cloth wrapper. After entering the old-system middle school, we used bags that hung from our shoulders.

About twenty years ago, I went to the United States and noticed many college students were riding bicycles with knapsacks on their backs. It looked very convenient. Now, knapsacks are very popular in Japan, especially among young girls. Even some old ladies are carrying small knapsacks on their backs.

I used to carry a knapsack when I went sketching, but since it became too heavy, I began pulling a small cart with

a painting bag on it. It is very convenient, but whenever I have to go up and down long subway stairs or walk on an unpaved, bumpy road, it becomes very troublesome.

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

In my childhood, *randoseru* were used only by elementary school pupils. Soon after we entered middle school (the present junior and senior high school), they were discarded and we changed to bags carried by hand. As *randoseru* were used only by children, they look and sound very childish to us.

Rucksacks also were used only by elementary schoolchildren when they went on excursions. Students of any schools above middle school never used them for their excursions. If they used them, they would feel ashamed of their childishness. As related in the "Daily Word" message, a number of varieties of them have become available nowadays. Many adults as well as children use them, even on the street. As the sight stimulates a very childish impression in my mind, I myself hesitate to use them.

This reminds me of the famous statement made by General Douglas MacArthur, who was generous, strict and frank in expressing his thoughts. Soon after he landed in Japan in 1945, he gave his first impression of Japan in the words, "Japan is a twelve-year-old." The country of Japan must have impressed him as being very childish.

What would be his new impression if he came to Japan on behalf of Mr. Clinton on April 16, 1996? I am afraid, looking at the sight of today's Japan filled with people with rucksacks on their backs, he would murmur, "Japan looks younger than before."

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

When I was a child (about 70 years ago) we used to call the knapsacks that soldiers put on their backs *hainô*. I don't

know what things they carried in them, but they were moss-green in color and made of thick cotton. I do not remember when and where I saw them. Before the Second World War, I remember seeing soldiers in Tokyo, each with a large, heavy knapsack on his back. I don't know what was in them.

After the war, knapsacks became popular all over Japan and now men and women of all ages are wearing them on their backs. They seem to be fashionable throughout this small island nation. I was embarrassed the day before yesterday when two young friends of mine presented me a brown, leather *randoseru*. I thanked them very much for their kindness, but I hesitate to use it because I am too old to put it on my back when I go shopping. What shall I do?

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

In April, we see small elementary school children with brand-new knapsacks, called *randoseru*, strapped to their backs. I learned from Dr. Offner that this Japanese word came from a Dutch word meaning "back bag". I suppose the German word "rucksack", meaning "back bag" became *ryukkusaku* in Japanese, like many other German words, such as *Seil*, *Flaken*, *Spur*, entering Japanese in mountain climbing and skiing terminology.

The German word for *randoseru* is *Ranzen*. Both of these German and Japanese school bags are strapped to backs but their shapes are different. Japanese ones are longer while German ones are wider and have a handle at the top. So the German ones can be carried in their hands later when children become older. Japanese *randoseru* are used only by elementary school children for six years. On the other hand, *ranzen* are carried by German children throughout their school years. I think Germans are more practical than the Japanese in this case.

Regarding *randoseru*, I have a pleasant memory. About twenty years

ago, when my first son entered primary school, every child had the same kind of *randoseru*: boys had black ones and girls red ones. Shortly before the school term began, I read an interesting story in the newspaper. A bag maker living in Bisai City made some *randoseru* of nylon cloth. The principal of a nearby primary school liked them because they were not so heavy to carry and cost half as much as regular ones. He suggested that his new pupils use them. The children were happy with their navy blue, light schoolbags.

I called the principal and asked him the phone number of the bagmaker. I ordered a nylon bag for my son. The bagmaker was concerned that my son would feel embarrassed because his nylon bag did not look so fine as the normal leather bags. He warned me that, in the worst case, my son would become the target of bullying. That did not concern me at all and I thought it would not matter to my son either. What concerned me was that a heavy leather school bag might prevent my slow-moving son from acting swiftly to elude a car on the way to and from school.

School began and my son went to school with a group of neighborhood children. His blue nylon bag was conspicuous. I did not hear anything about bullying due to his school bag at that time. He never came home crying. However, I heard later from one of his friends that he was teased by older children many times.

When he went to junior high school, I asked him whether or not he liked his nylon school bag. He answered that he liked it. He told me that he even became popular thanks to it. One day, an old woman, noticing his blue nylon bag, asked him if he was going on an outing. She took his blue school bag for a knapsack used on outings because the color of such rucksacks for boys were usually blue. Since then, he was called *ensoku boya*, meaning "hiking boy".

When my second son entered school, I ordered a similar school bag for him. He was instantly recognized as the brother of the "hiking boy".

(NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

"Jumping and dancing for joy/with their brand-new knapsacks on their backs/
Dazzling are the fresh first-graders."

Joyful looks of young boys and girls around the country tell us that the fresh first-graders are all very hopeful about their future. Indeed, brand-new knapsacks on their backs symbolize dazzling hopes of the fresh first-graders and their parents. The knapsacks contain textbooks and notebooks with which the pupils will study and learn many things. They are supposed to carry them to and from school every day.

Elementary school pupils throughout the country carry their knapsacks to and from school. Why do they do so? I do not know when such a practice got started, but people take it for granted that the young pupils in elementary school carry their knapsacks on their backs to and from school. I would like to challenge this long-standing practice.

Let the pupils open their knapsacks to show you what is contained in them and you will find their textbooks, notebooks and some stationery. In class, teacher and pupil alike regard the textbooks as the most important teaching/learning material. Teachers try to paraphrase what is written in textbooks while pupils try hard to remember what is taught. The traditional way of studying in class may be said to be passive and inert. *Therandoseru* symbolizes this inert way of learning. Is it not high time to reform the long-standing, bookish way of studying in class? To meet the challenge of the times better, it seems we should give up the *randoseru* first and devise some alternatives, though it may sound somewhat drastic.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

An article in the Sunday issue—of *Chûnichi Shinbun*, reflecting on Expo 70 held in Osaka in 1970, noted that no one carried a "day bag" there, but at a school festival in 1976, quite a few students carried bags on their backs. Presumably, having a "day bag" became fashionable about that time. Nowadays, "day bags" and knapsacks are very popular, not only among young people but also among older people. We feel free when we can use both of our hands easily.

In April, when I visited Kamakura, a nice-looking knapsack in a shop in front of Kamakura Shrine caught my eye and, without stopping to think, I bought it. I have had no chance to use it yet, but I would like to take it with me on my next trip.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

April 16 Message (Subject #304)

Today's theme is related to a man who was born 129 years ago today, on April 16, 1867, in the American state of Indiana, the son of a clergyman. His name was Wilbur Wright. He and his younger brother, Orville, were aviation pioneers. On December 17, 1903, they made the first successful flight of a motor-powered airplane. On that day, Wilbur flew the biplane for about 260 meters in 59 seconds. The theme for today is: Airplanes. What do you think of airplanes? Have you made trips by air, either domestically or overseas? If you have not, would you like to do so? If you have, what impressions do you have of airplanes and what memories do you have of experiences while traveling in them? How have airplanes changed the world and human history, for better or for worse?

I have made many trips by airplane. I cannot count how many—perhaps over a hundred. It is very convenient to go anywhere. It takes many days to go to a foreign country by ship. Recently, we may take a non-stop flight to Europe, which makes the time still shorter.

In our country, I take an airplane if I go to Kyûshû, Shikoku, Hokkaidô or Tôhoku. I can see the countryside with my own eyes enroute to my destination if I go by train, but it takes many hours. We can learn about and become familiar with foreign countries easier than in the old days. Regarding whether airplanes have changed things for better or worse, I think the result is about half and half.

I have heard the saying, *Sonna ni isoide doko e iku* in Japanese. It means: "Where are you going in such a hurry?" Not only Japan, but the whole world is changing at a dizzying speed and airplanes play a part in the present circumstances. I hope they will play a better rather than a worse part.

(MICHIO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

When I heard the theme, Airplanes, the first thing that came to my mind was the recent tragic death of a seven-year-old girl. She died with her father and instructor just after her small airplane took off in a heavy rain. She was on her way to the east coast from the west coast of the United States in an attempt to make a new record as the youngest pilot to fly across the continent.

I was surprised to hear that the governor of California sent a message, expressing his admiration for her attempt noting that it reflected the spirit of the United States. Is it really so? The girl's death was not caused by the spirit of adventure but by her parents' desire to be somebody. I support the *Guinness Book of World Records'* decision to omit records of dangerous activities as noted in the "Daily Word" message of March 15.

As a father of twelve- and fourteen-year-old daughters, I cannot imagine allowing them to do such a thing. I prefer to watch them play flight simulation on a computer screen. I can't believe there is no age limit to be a pilot in the United States. In Japan, you can't even drive a car until you are eighteen.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Yokohama)

The Aviation and Universe Museum was recently opened in Kagamihara City, Gifu Prefecture, near the office of our corporation. That city's airport and aviation industry both have long histories. Many famous fighter planes were designed and produced there during the war and since the war, a base of the Self-Defence Force has been located there. At the museum, we can study the history of airplanes and the theory of spaceships and rockets. Observing many kinds of airplanes at the museum, I was filled with nostalgia, recalling my boyhood in pre-war days, when we yearned to fly and airplanes stimulated a militant spirit within us. To make model planes (most of them powered by an elastic cord) was the most popular enjoyment of us boys at that time.

Air raids by American bombers provided us with unpleasant encounters with airplanes (most of which were B-29s) during the war. Every time an air raid alarm sounded, we had to take shelter underground. Some of my naughty friends ignored the alarm, gazed upon the imposing forms of the B-29s and were severely scolded by a teacher. In a music class, we were trained to tell the difference between the sounds made by each plane.

My first encounter with an airplane as a passenger was around 1955. Then, I flew from Nagoya to Hiroshima on some urgent business. The plane was very small (maybe it was a DC-3 type). At that time, it was still unusual to use an airplane for domestic travel. My col-

leagues talked much about it and gave me the assignment of investigating the toilet facilities—whether the excrement was promptly dropped or kept inside until landing. It was quite a funny story. I made use of the toilet even though I had no need to do so and reported to them after my return.

These days, I make it a rule to travel abroad at least once a year, so I have many opportunities to use airplanes. Therefore, I have many splendid memories of landscapes viewed from airplanes: Mt. McKinley covered with snow in Alaska where we stopped to refuel; the Alps on my way from Italy to France; the boundless expanse of the Gobi Desert, including scattered dry lakes with rock salt, and so on.

I have had a variety of interesting experiences when traveling by air in foreign countries, especially in less-developed countries. Some years ago, I flew from Hsian to Beijing in China. We were kept waiting for the airplane's departure at Hsian Airport. Passengers kept quiet during the first one or two hours because we had become accustomed to the slovenly service of the domestic lines. After three hours' delay, however, passengers began to complain and to negotiate with the company. The company declared, at last, that their plane could not fly and a military plane would be substituted. By virtue of the alternative, the flying time was much shorter and we were able to enter and exit through the airport gates without following the normal procedures. Even now, I am still skeptical about the decision, imagining that it may be a regular part-time job for the military.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I traveled to Indonesia by plane for the first time in the summer of 1976. It was on business. We left Narita in the morning and arrived at Jakarta in the evening, stopping at Hongkong en route.

During my flight, I had two strong impressions. One was how strong the lifting power of the plane was when taking off from the runway. It was as if the plane was pulling me up into the sky with limitless power. Another one was how the plane shook, even in the sky. The plane happened to encounter a violent current of air when flying over Hongkong. It felt as if we were riding in a bus on a rocky road.

It is certain that the modern development of airplanes has made the world smaller, travel more convenient and enhanced friendship between countries. However, airplane accidents never cease. I am going to Korea and Taiwan this coming September. It is true that when I think of flying to these two countries, I am concerned about the dangers involved prior to the enjoyment of the travels. Travelling by plane will never really be comfortable until plane accidents completely cease.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

Wilbur and Orville Wright succeeded in making a power-driven flight in 1903 for the first time in history. On the very first flight, Orville was above the ground for just 12 seconds. This short flight and others made that day by these American brothers were the beginning of today's technologically advanced aviation industry.

Owing to this epochal invention, we enjoy a convenient and efficient life in this modern age. I, myself, was able to travel to Europe in my university days, but I haven't taken an airplane for the past ten years. Consequently, on hearing this theme, I was reminded of my travel in Europe in my youth. I visited many medieval towns surrounded by walls with a river running through them. The red-roofed houses there were spectacular. I saw many fine paintings, met various people and, of course, improved my English conversation ability. For just a

68,000 yen ticket, I was able to have this experience. Our pioneers struggled, failed and succeeded on behalf of their descendants. I am grateful to great inventors for their efforts, known and unknown

(TOSHIYUKI KOTERAZAWA, Kasugai)

Airplanes are one of the most convenient conveyances in the world. My husband and I made a trip by air from Osaka to Hirosaki in Aomori Prefecture more than 15 years ago. Just before the airplane left the ground, I prayed that God would let us arrive safely at Hirosaki. The airplane we boarded was a two-propeller plane. The propellers on the left and right propelled the plane. The plane was a YS11 and it was the smallest kind of plane at that time, carrying about 30 passengers. The noise was so great that my husband and I could scarcely carry on a conversation. As I expected, lunch was served to each passenger and afterward we were told that a few candies in the mouth would keep us from getting airsick and that was right. Since then, I have never taken a trip by air until today.

I wish I could meet Richard and Katherine Porter who live in the state of Utah in the United States. We have been corresponding for 62 years, since 1934. Both of us have dreamed of realizing our hope of meeting each other. If such an opportunity were given to us, I would fly to Utah in the first class section of an airplane from Osaka or Narita. On the other hand, there are often airplane crashes because of turbulent air. Most of the passengers die in such a case, so it is necessary to have insurance.

(TAMATO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

I know two women who hate airplanes. One is an Italian, Ms. Rilz. Her husband was my former German boss at the German Culture Center in Osaka. Mr. Rilz had a three-month homeland vaca-

tion every third year--and flew to Germany with his two daughters. Ms. Rilz never accompanied them but took a ship. At that time, the Suez Canal was closed and it took her more than one month to get to Europe. That did not matter to her at all. She was so afraid of an airplane accident in which she imagined nobody would survive.

All my friends hearing about this regarded her as selfish and egotistic. I agreed with them to some extent, but my opinion was a little different. Before the German Culture Center was officially opened, I worked for several months in the Rilz's private residence. Ms. Rilz was a great cook and prepared very good meals for her family. She always extended her warm-hearted hospitality to every guest she had. Despite all this, she seemed not to be grown-up. She sometimes behaved like a child whose attitude tends to lack thoughtfulness for others. I think her avoiding an airplane trip came from her childish fear, not because she was an egotist.

Another woman who hates airplanes is Ms. Michiko Imai, a famous alpinist and medical doctor. I don't know her personally, but I heard her tell why she was afraid of airplanes. Her reason was that an airplane in flight was not in touch with the earth. Ms. Imai climbed many high mountains all over the world and slept many nights in a hammock, hanging from a rock thousands of meters high on a cliff. She felt very comfortable up there because the air was incredibly fresh and there was no noise of big cities. No matter how high the mountain was, she had no fear. But she was afraid on a plane that had no physical contact with the ground.

I don't hate airplanes. I think airplanes are the safest means of transportation as long as they are flying high in the sky. But I feel uneasy when the airplane I am on begins to take off and to land.

(NAOMI KOKIDO, Handa)

I have taken airplanes so many times that I can't count them. Every time I get into an airplane, I get nervous, because I wonder what I will do if there is an accident.

The best airline I have taken is Singapore Airlines. To begin with, the flight attendants are all lovely and cheerful. On JAL, the difference between attractive flight attendants and unattractive flight attendants is too great. Singapore Airlines doesn't charge for alcoholic beverages and provides passengers with very good meals and many kinds of juice that we can't find on other airlines. I have never met anyone who spoke ill of Singapore Airlines.

In general, the airlines in America are not so good. Those in Asian countries offer better service to the passengers.

(HIROMI FURUTA, Kita, Nagoya)

During the war, I had a chance to board a small military transport plane from Manado to Makassar on Celebes Island. It was my first ride in an airplane. Then I was a bit nervous because an airplane with a Japanese Muslim leader on board was shot down just a little before that in that area.

After the war, I traveled abroad many times by plane. Through the window, I enjoyed many beautiful scenes, such as glistening snow-covered Alps mountain ranges, colorful patterns of coral reefs in the Java Sea, shining golden pagodas in Bangkok, grand and spectacular Colorado canyons, etc.

Soon I am planning to go to Spain on a sketch tour. But when I think of the long hours of painful sitting in a narrow seat, I become melancholic.

Voyages by ship, on the other hand, are very pleasant. I have experienced a total of about a hundred days of such voyages. All day long, we can freely enjoy beautiful scenery, magnificent views of sunrise and sunset, a school of dolphins swimming along with the ship, a group

of flying fish and, if lucky, we could see a whale spouting water far away.

I recommend that you try a sea voyage also, someday.

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

Images of an armada of U. S. B-29 bombers high up in the sky are still vivid in my memory. They made a startling appearance over the city of Osaka, my hometown, in the middle of March 1945. They dropped countless incendiary bombs there to destroy the community. I can never forget the horrifying violence done by that great exhibition of American civilization and the rage I felt wondering about the cause of that disaster.

Fortunately, however, what the aircraft brought us is not only the destruction of towns and people but the destruction of distance as well, to quote the celebrated historian, Arnold Toynbee. Today, countless people are enjoying flights on passenger planes coming and going from country to country. According to a report, more than 10 million people enjoyed traveling abroad by plane in a recent year from Japan alone. It goes without saying that cargo flights across the world greatly help us lead an affluent life.

As for me, I have never been abroad. But I have had some opportunities of being on a plane. I made trips by plane going to and coming from Kyûshû and Hokkaidô on business. I had a very good time on board, looking down on gorgeous clusters of clouds shining in the glow of the setting sun.

It is quite deplorable that plane crashes occur so often despite the high sophistication of modern technology. Sadly enough, there is no button leading to absolute safety. The recent crash of an American private plane piloted by a very young girl is a case in point. We can not ignore the law of gravity after all.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

Traveling by airplane is very exciting and I like it very much. Each trip provides its own memories. Among them, I will write of my trip to Australia last summer.

We, members of a Friendship Mission to Sydney, took Qantas Airline, which is said to be one of the safest airlines in the world. We left Nagoya Airport at the scheduled time. After a short flight, about an hour, we landed and were told that, due to engine trouble, we would have to wait until they could find out the cause of the trouble. No one expected it to take long, but it took two entire days. We stayed two nights in Narita and Tokyo. They were really an irritating and boring two days. Every 2-3 hours, we were invited to the lobby and explanations were given regarding the progress of the repair work.

On the morning of the third day after leaving Nagoya, we were able to board the plane again. That day, August 23rd, happened to be my birthday. I told one of the attendants who then brought me a big bottle of wine with a big smile and said "Happy birthday". I was offered a business class seat. Whenever I look at the photo of me with the big bottle surrounded by several crew members, I recall the happy moment.

Due to the delayed arrival, sight-seeing at Gold Coast and Brisbane was cancelled but fortunately we were able to attend the main event which took place in the city hall in Sydney. On our return flight to Nagoya, we again took Qantas. It was a smooth flight. We four women were invited to the cockpit. I can't describe it in detail, but we had a great experience there. The view from the cockpit was quite different than from my seat.

I always enjoy plane trips, but the one drawback for me is the difficulty in getting used to the taste of the food.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

April 23 Message (Subject #305)

Today is the birthday of a man who has been called "the greatest playwright who ever lived", "a creative genius unique in all literature" and "a dramatist of note who lived by writing things to quote." He was born in an English town on the Avon River, called Stratford-upon-Avon and his name is William Shakespeare. Actually, his date of birth has not been documented, but records show that he was baptized on April 26, 1564 and since it was customary to have the baptism three days after birth, April 23rd is the accepted date of his birth. I am suggesting this man and his writings as the subject an essay. What do you think of William Shakespeare? When did you first become acquainted with him? Have you read many of his dramas or poems? Can you understand them? Which ones impressed you most deeply? Why do you think Shakespearean literature is so highly regarded? I will be happy to read your ideas or memories related to this man.

I read a book of Shakespeare's dramas, translated by Shôyô Tsubouchi, when I was thirteen years old as my father had his complete works. I could not understand them all, but I read them, one by one. The books were all burned during the Second World War. I remember seeing one of them with a half-burned blue cover in my father's room. I read the same books when I was a student. As homework, we had to read and write summaries of them. While reading them, I put them on the stage in my mind. His thinking ("the play's the thing") includes ideology, philosophy, outlook on life, etc. His dramas are difficult to understand

but enjoyable. He uses many words and his plots are skillfully devised.

I have read a book about Shakespeare by Yoshio Nakano which I received from a professor of English literature. In that book, he wrote about Shakespeare's skillful use of words. For instance, Shakespeare used three different terms for a ghost: 1) "this thing", 2) "dreadful sight", 3) "this apparition". I read *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* in English. They are difficult to understand because many old words are used, such as "thou", "thy", "art", "dost" or "meanest" and the grammar is different than that used now.

I made a trip to Stratford-on-Avon. I visited his house and Anne Hathaway's Cottage. I was able to touch his desk and sit in a chair there. On another day, I visited the George Inn in London. Shakespeare's dramas were performed in front of this inn. The inn is a restaurant now. I entered it before it was open and asked to look around because I had to hurry to catch my flight back to Japan. It is an old wooden building such as we cannot see in Japan. The glass windows were about 50 centimeters square. The George Inn faced a plaza which was used as a theater. We must imagine an old-style theater when we read Shakespeare's dramas. A plaza became a theater. There was no building, of course. Seats were put in a hall on the second floor of the inn at that time. I cannot forget the deep impression I had when looking down at the plaza, like a noblewoman of old. If I can visit again, I would like to spend a longer time there. I hope the place will never change.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon, England. He was the representative poet and playwright in the Elizabethan Age, one of the most prosperous times in the nation's history. He was successful as an actor and as a

special playwright for a theater in London around 1586. From around 1591, he published many literary works, including tragedy, comedy and historical dramas. His principal works are *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* (the "four great tragedies"). He won the highest praise for his abundance of terms and his skill in delineating characters. On the other hand, however, some great writers did not value his works highly. T. S. Eliot concluded that *Hamlet* was less than a success and Tolstoy deprecated *King Lear*.

The "Shakespeare-Bacon Controversy" is a tentative theory advanced by Delia Bacon, an American lady, that Shakespeare's works were written by Francis Bacon. Also, there are other views skeptical of him and his work, but the very existence of such theories, I think, is proof of his greatness.

Shakespeare has exerted a great influence on Japanese writers. Many scholars have studied and are still studying about him and his works. My wife's graduation thesis was related to his works so she has many books concerning him. (In spite of that, she is unskilled in daily conversation, which, by the way, is a typical indication of our poor English education system.) We studied Shakespeare's works in English classes in our middle school and high school days. Of course, the text used in those textbooks was simplified because the original would have been too difficult. Nevertheless, we were very happy just realizing that we were reading famous literary works of Shakespeare. We were content to know that famous phrase: "To be or not to be, that is the question." One day we went to a cinema in a body, led by our teacher, to view an English film, *Hamlet*. Our teacher gave us the text of the actors' speech beforehand for our study, but it was too difficult for us and we could hardly understand the speech. We felt we somehow gained an insight into the difficulty of Shakespeare's works.

I visited England once several years ago, but the schedule was crowded and the visit was limited to London and its environs. England is one of the countries where I would like to travel extensively from place to place, taking as much time as I wish. Someday, when I have a chance to do so, Stratford-on-Avon will be one of my preferred destinations. When my wife made a tour of England some years ago with my daughter, she visited there and told me of her pleasure in fulfilling a long-cherished desire. I can easily imagine her satisfaction, since Shakespeare was the subject of her study. Recently I make it a rule to travel abroad once a year, but usually I join a party on a so-called "package tour" which is easy but not satisfactory. It is my dream to travel abroad in the future with a liberal expenditure of time and money. (MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

William Shakespeare was a great English dramatist. He wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, etc. As I noted before, we read *Richard III* in our senior year and a little before that, I read *The Merchant of Venice* in translation. I saw *Hamlet* in a Russian movie.

I thought that Shakespeare devised an interesting story, but recent college news indicated that he imitated an older story (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

(YASUKO IZUMI, Seto)

William Shakespeare was introduced to Japan in 1884 through the translation of *Julius Caesar* by Dr. Shoyo Tsubouchi, a famous writer and professor of English literature. He finished a translation of the complete works of Shakespeare in 1928. I remember they were a series of more than 30 small-sized volumes with a blue cover. His translation seemed so old-fashioned and kabuki-like that I could not become familiar with it,

but I sometimes borrowed some of the books from the library and enjoyed reading them. I also remember that Shakespeare's stories were so interesting that some of them, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* were rewritten for children as fairy tales. Although Japan is not an English-speaking country, she has been familiar with Shakespeare for many years.

I entered college in 1941. The college had a Shakespeare Garden on the campus with impressive neatly-trimmed hedges surrounding a lawn and flower beds filled with savory, hyssop, lavender and other flowers and herbs related to the works of Shakespeare. In those days, it was customary at that college for senior students to perform a Shakespearean drama in English as an annual event. I saw *The Merchant of Venice*, as a freshman and *Hamlet* as a sophomore. I was deeply impressed with the great effort and wonderful talent of the performers. Unfortunately, during the war as the situation got worse and worse, we had to give up that custom. Now, I remember how frustrated I was with my poor English compared with my classmates and I had to study Shakespeare whose English was 350 years old! Fortunately, our teacher was very good. Under his appropriate guidance, we read *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*. Of course, we were told to read books with commentaries. I was impressed that Shakespeare's English was much more difficult and unfamiliar than the English of the King James Version of the Bible though both were generally of the same age. Our teacher kindly taught us how to deepen our understanding and appreciation to enable us to gain greater benefit from his great works. We were sometimes told to memorize some of his famous phrases. I do not remember them well, but among them were: "It's Greek to me", "salad days", "green-eyed jealousy", etc. I am quite regretful that I have lost the textbooks and notebooks I used

in college though it was more than half a century ago and our dear teacher passed away long ago. I remember learning some of his sonnets and songs from such plays as *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*. We were deeply impressed with the poem, "To the Memory of My Beloved Master, William Shakespeare" by Ben Jonson.

It is amazing that even we Japanese today can enjoy and be deeply impressed with his works. He lived in England almost 400 years ago. He was really a genius who knew human nature from the ugliest to the most sublime. His characters express themselves so naturally that we feel as if they were living very close to us. We can meet characters of ancient Rome, medieval England and Renaissance Italy, from fairyland and myth.

I would like to try to read Shakespeare again and deepen my appreciation so that I might live the rest of my life more meaningfully. Fortunately, I was able to visit Stratford-upon-Avon in 1988 and enjoyed sightseeing there.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

Stratford-upon-Avon, an old English town, reminded me of the trip we made some thirteen years ago. Since our English teacher was from England and majored in drama at his college, Malcolm Duff, our tutor at the time, took us to the birthplace of Shakespeare. We looked around the house and took some pictures in front of it. In the evening we went to the Royal Shakespeare Theater to see a play entitled *The Comedy of Errors*, by William Shakespeare. As I had no knowledge of the plot, I couldn't understand the story at all. I remember hearing people often laughing throughout the play. I wondered then why the play evoked such laughter. I later learned the outline of the story.

"About thirty years before the story begins, Aegeon, a merchant of Syracuse, became the father of twin boys,

both named Antipholus. He bought another set of twins, two Dromios born on the same day, to serve them. Aegeon and his wife, Aemelia, were traveling with their children when they were separated by a storm at sea. Aegeon managed to save only one Antipholus and one Dromio. Now he has come to Ephesus in search of the lost twins, Antipholus and Dromio. What he doesn't know is that Antipholus and Dromio have also come to Ephesus in search of their long-lost brothers. There is no end of confusion when Antipholus is mistaken for Antipholus and Dromio for Dromio, and even Dromio mistakes Antipholus for Antipholus, and vice versa!"

As you might imagine from reading the above, the story is so complicated that it is no wonder I was unable to make it out. After the play was over, we enjoyed a late dinner with the tour group members. I don't know why, but I remember that night in summer when I hear the name "Shakespeare".

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

I know the name of William Shakespeare and how great he was as an English writer. However, I have little knowledge about his works. I only read, in my younger days, a book entitled *Riya Ou Monogatari*, which was maybe a shortened form of his tragic drama, *King Lear*.

In my high school days, we studied *Gulliver's Travels* written by Jonathan Swift as an English textbook. Our English teacher was Tetsuzou Kawase, who himself studied English in England, staying there for five years. As a teacher, he was so strict that we could never relax in the classroom. For example, we would study hard by ourselves on the previous nights because he would ask each of us at random to translate sentences. Thanks to his strict teaching, I was able to attain my present level of English ability.

William Shakespeare is called the greatest writer in the world. If Profes-

sor Kawase had used a literary work of William Shakespeare as an English textbook, might I have gained a better knowledge of English than I now have? It may be so, but, on the other hand, I am afraid I might have given up learning English before becoming better.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

In the book, *Kokoro no Sanpô michi*, written by Dr. Offner, he mentioned an interesting story commemorating the birthday of William Shakespeare on April 23rd. According to the book, the Authorized Version of the English Bible and the works of Shakespeare are most important in the history of English literature. Shakespeare was born in England. When he was 18, he got married to a woman named Ann. She was eight years older than he and they had three children. In my thinking, an ordinary, homey atmosphere does not fit his image, so it was a little surprising to me.

The first play I came across was *The Merchant of Venice*, which was performed by upper-class students at a school festival. I can well remember the excitement on the stage. Since my father was a moviegoer, I used to be taken to the theater from my childhood. In those days, due to my lack of knowledge, I always wondered why Westerners wore only black and white. In a real sense, the play, *The Merchant of Venice* was an eye-opener to the West for me.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

His name takes me back to my young days when it was recommended that I recite some lines from one of his famous dramas. I remember the recitation satisfied me and my teacher was also happy to hear me recite them. Even after half a century since then, I can still recite these lines: "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, (omission to save space) / it is a tale / Told

by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing."

These lines symbolize the sense of *ars longa vita brevis*. The author declares in cool blood that human life is only ephemeral. I cannot help being filled with awe when I recite these lines.

It is too well-known to mention that his works are a wonderful treasure house of adages and maxims. They are an invaluable legacy of the history of all humankind. What I have read are only a few dramas of the great dramatist.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

If my memory is correct, all the works of Shakespeare were translated into the Japanese language for the first time by Sanki Ichikawa of Waseda University. Our English teacher in middle school had studied English under Professor Ichikawa so he often enthusiastically explained about Shakespeare's works. He especially liked *The Merchant of Venice*. Due to his earnest teaching, I still remember the whole story. It is quite strange.

Incidentally, after that, I had a prejudice against Jewish people for a long time. Due to this story, I thought all Jewish people were money-makers like Shylock without a human heart.

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

To write or not to write an essay, that is the question. Although I cannot say that I have enough discernment to appreciate excerpts from Shakespeare's plays, my interest is stimulated by the following lines from *King Lear*: "Nothing will come of nothing". "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth: I love your majesty, According to my bond; nor more nor less." "Mend your speech a little, Lest it may mar your fortunes."

Much Ado About Nothing represents the universality of Shakespeare's appeal. Why is he so famous worldwide?

I believe his spectacular success made him famous.

Hamlet is welcomed enthusiastically by the public and this is yet another indication of Shakespeare's popularity. The popularity of Shakespeare with people throughout the world has clearly been confirmed. Emphasis must be laid on the need for translations combining accuracy with the poetic perception of the original and for critical interpretations of the plays with full awareness of the modern world.

(JAIME IWAI, Owariasahi)

Sweet memories of Shakespeare's country vividly come to mind for my husband and I visited there on a beautiful day in May just one year ago.

The pastoral countryside, ancient towns and villages along the valley of the River Avon had the timeless charm and tranquillity of a bygone age. There were picturesque medieval houses and cottages surrounded with lovely gardens where all the colorful flowers were in full bloom. How comfortable was the breeze and how fresh the aroma it carried! For a while, I felt as if I were in a fairyland.

Warwick Castle, one of the most magnificent fortresses dating from the 13th century, rose majestically above the River Avon. It boasted massive walls and towers, Guy's Tower and Caesar's Tower, both over 120 feet high. They must have been witnesses to the lives of the powerful and dispossessed, the rich and poor of generation after generation.

I was drawn to Stratford-Upon-Avon not simply because it was the birthplace of the greatest poet and playwright but for the atmosphere generated by the influence of the Bard of Avon.

(SADAE HASHIMOTO, Minami, Nagoya)

"What a joy it is to find just the right word for the right occasion."

(Proverbs 15:23)

April 30 Message (Subject #306)

In Shakespeare's famous drama, Romeo and Juliet are lovers, but they belong to two feuding families. In her famous speech, Juliet says: O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore are thou Romeo? / Deny thy father and refuse thy name. / 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; / Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. / What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot, / Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man. O, be some other name! / What's in a name? that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet." In the case of Romeo and Juliet, a family name was the obstacle to their marriage. These days also, family names are a source of controversy in society and some government offices. When people marry, should one of them be forced to give up his/her family name? Cannot they both keep their own surnames as individuals even after marriage? But if they do, what surname is to be given to their children? Such questions are being discussed in some circles these days. What is your opinion on this matter and what are your reasons for holding it?

I prefer to keep my own surname after marriage because half of my old friends call me "Ishida San" and I answer "Yes". My earlier name is in my mind until now. It brings back many happy memories of my younger days. My earlier surname not only evokes happy memories but is related to my self-consciousness as a young girl.

Recently we have been granted the right to choose our surnames, whether we keep our own or take that of our husbands. I think, however, that children's

surnames should be decided by their parents. Is it a good idea that children decide on their surnames themselves when they become 20 years old? If they can change them at that time, they have the responsibility for their own name. It is important that we take individual responsibility for all things in a democratic nation. (MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

The Family Registration Act of our country provides that husband and wife must assume one and the same family name. Formally, both sexes are equal insofar as the family name is concerned, but actually they are not equal. Reflecting the common practice in prewar days and the power relationship in present society, the proportion of marriages choosing the husband's name is about 98 percent. That is to say, women are actually compelled to change their name at the time of their marriage. In keeping with women's self-reliance intention, this practice has come to be felt contrary to the equality of the sexes provided in the Constitution and as depriving a wife of her identity. Today, many women are active in society and, as a result, their age at marriage is rather high. They gain many achievements while they are still single, but once they get married, the achievements are separated from them by the change of their name, which is a great handicap for them. In addition to this, the marriage of an only son and an only daughter confronts the desire of both families to maintain their respective names. From this state of affairs, a demand for a "respective name" system has become stronger and stronger over the years. Recently, it has become one of the main concerns of the women's movement.

I myself am personally very interested in this problem. My wife was an only daughter, so it was her natural desire and that of her parents to preserve their name after our marriage. I also did

not want to change my name, considering my 30-year career and my own identity though I was not an only son. As a result of our discussion, we came to the following conclusion: when we had children, we would give my wife's surname to one of them. When my son was born, we let him assume my wife's maiden surname by means of his adoption by her parents, which was the only way we could preserve my wife's family name.

When we got married, my wife was working for a certain company and wanted to continue to use her maiden name for the above-mentioned reason. I was in agreement, so she continued to do so until she retired from that company.

From this personal experience, I completely agree with the idea of the "respective name" system. But the adoption of the system should be entrusted to the persons concerned. There are still many people who wish to preserve the present system. They think that the same surname system is indispensable for the unity of family members. Of course, there is another viewpoint. The counter-argument points to the actual state of affairs in other countries. In Western countries, many women continue to use their maiden names after marriage or use two names at the same time. In China and Korea, women use their maiden names throughout their lives and the children ordinarily assume their fathers name. Yet, every family leads a happy life without serious trouble. The judicious policy will be to prepare a wide range of options when the present system is amended in the future.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

After getting married, Japanese women, in general, change their family names to that of their husband. There is an old Japanese saying, *fushou fuzui*, which means "wives should always follow their husbands". If women are forced to change their surnames to that of their

husbands, that is apparently one of the bad legacies of Japanese customs. It is simply an indication of inequality between men and women. If a woman prefers her surname to that of her husband, she should be able to keep it. If her husband prefers his wife's surname to his, he should be able to take hers. Such a concept is in accord with the principle of sexual equality.

In regard to the idea of keeping one's own surname as an individual even after marriage, I wonder if that is wise.. I think that a family should not be simply another form of lovers' cohabitation. If it were permitted, it would be nothing but an immature family, in which it would be difficult to raise healthy children. (HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

Since I am conservative on this issue, I do not want my wife to use a different name—her maiden name, but I am not against the growing tendency for women to use their maiden names even after their marriage. My friend, Takahiko Yamamori, lets his wife use her maiden name although they have been married for several years. In fact, I've never heard his wife say, "My name is Mika Yamamori". She always says "Mika Toff". I consider it natural for her to use her maiden name because she is a woman of mixed blood. Her father, who is now dead, was British and her mother is Japanese.

I know another woman who uses her maiden name. She is British and lives in Bristol, England with her family. Back in 1982, when my wife and I studied in Manchester, Margaret, my wife's best friend, married a Sudanese scholar of social anthropology. Then she accompanied her husband, Mohammed, who got a job at Khartoum University. Several years later, however, they got divorced because Mohammed had an affair with a Danish woman. Margaret was so depressed that she didn't want to marry again, but she had a daughter, Hyatt.

Back in England, -Margaret worked hard, taking care of her daughter and one day met a very kind gentleman, a Cambridge graduate, named Ben Toth. Both Margaret and Ben loved each other so much that they wanted to marry. In fact, they did marry, but decided to keep their own names. Margaret goes by the name of Margaret Robins Salih while her husband is Ben Toth. The daughter is Hyatt Robins Salih, while the second daughter, the child of Margaret and Ben, is Mary Toth. The first problem, according to Margaret, came when she and Ben wanted to enrol their first daughter, Hyatt, in a nearby primary school. The school found it difficult to recognize Hyatt as the child of Margaret and Ben. After a bitter confrontation with the school, Hyatt was enrolled, but they seem to be having more difficulty as Hyatt gets older.

I do not know exactly what problems a couple using different names will have, but I can imagine they are complicated when children are involved, so my conclusion is this: It should be left up to the couple, but they should be very careful if they decide to use different family names, paying special attention to their plans for a family.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

About ten years ago, I made friends with a Korean woman whose essay was published in a column of the *Asahi Shinbun*. She wrote about so-called *sōshi-kaimei*, meaning "assumed Japanese names" the Japanese government forced Koreans to use during the colonial period.

When I visited her, I was surprised to see her full name along with her husband's name on the nameplate. Their surnames were different: hers was Park and his was Yoon. She told me what family names were like in Korea.

In her homeland, Confucianism exerts a powerful influence on people's thoughts and lives. Koreans feel a great reverence for their ancestors. So they

keep their family names at any cost. If they change their family names, they are considered to have rejected their origin and profaned their ancestors. Korean women keep their maiden name even after they get married. When they have children, all of them, daughters and sons, adopt their father's name, not their mother's. Koreans don't get married to another having the same family name because that means they marry their own relatives and become defiled. They also don't marry cousins.

Koreans don't adopt another's family name which was often the case in Japan previously. For example, a Japanese from a good family having no children adopted a promising youth, let him bear his family name and assigned him as his heir. A Japanese rich merchant who had no sons let his top servant marry his daughter and made him his successor. Thus Japanese men changed their surnames to keep a family's lineage or to take over a business.

In recent years, thousands of married Japanese career women want to keep their maiden names. I think this is a very natural movement. By keeping her own family name, a woman can be independent of her husband and his family. I think it is also convenient for a man to keep his own family name in any case. However, it is required by law that a married couple bear one family name, not two different ones.

The law on family names should be changed. However, changing the law will not go smoothly because it is linked with various problems, including that of *koseki*, meaning "family registration". This is a very Japanese official recording system where not an individual person but a married couple is regarded as the smallest unit of society. I would say this is nothing but an obsolete remainder of the feudal system where keeping a family name was a priority among samurai while people of lower classes were

chained to their birthplace to be exploited. I am very interested in how this matter will go. Anyway, I hope every individual person will be valued more than a family unit.

By the way, Koreans also have a family registration system that is almost the same as the Japanese *koseki*. A married Korean couple get a new family register in which their name and address along with their birthplaces and their parents' names are written. When a child is born, his or her name is written in their family register. When the children get married, their names are deleted from their parents' family document and they get their own new family register along with their spouse.

Recently I heard on television that there were only three countries in the world that had *koseki*. They are Korea, Japan and Taiwan.

(NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

A family is supposed to have its own family name. When newlyweds start a new family, it must have its own name. So far, it has been Japanese custom to adopt the husband's family name as the new family's name. People have taken the custom for granted for a long time. But recently, wives have challenged the legitimacy of the social custom, so the question has arisen.

"Why should I be forced to give up my own family name?" asks a wife. "Why cannot I keep my own surname as an individual even after marriage?" questions another. If the husband agrees with her and lets her keep her own surname, what surname is to be given to their children? Another question arises.

Looking through the pros and cons in a magazine, I think there is a very long way to go before the time is ripe for a change in the long-standing social custom. More active argument is a must.

I hear in Korea or China, wife and husband hold their own original surname

respectively, even after their marriage. Which family name do their children hold? I do not know. Also, I hear in some other countries, children hold both of their parents names as their own family name.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

When I think of my childhood before the war, my eyes fill with tears, recalling how dearly I was loved by my family members, including my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins on both parents' sides. In those days, family ties were very strong in this country. We cannot deny that they sometimes caused many difficulties and even tragedies, but at least we should remember that we were disciplined to behave in such a way as to not bring disgrace on our family name and ancestors.

After the end of the war, our civil law was amended and a family is defined as consisting of only a married couple and their children, a so-called nuclear family. As a reaction to the family bondage, heavy-laden for a long time, we have enjoyed some sort of freedom, but in the meantime we lost many of our precious assets from the past. We still have days for family gatherings, such as New Year's days and the Bon Festival days to enjoy reunions, but Japanese are not so outspoken as Westerners. I wonder whether we Japanese family members really enjoy heartwarming association and pull together in days of trials. Since the end of the war, we have been affected by the individualistic way of thinking for a long time. These days, family names are a source of controversy. We should realize that the issue has crucial importance for the present well-being of our country and, subsequently, even our future will be affected greatly.

Some say that when people marry, both should keep their own surnames as individuals even after marriage. I cannot agree with that opinion. They should re-

member that even their own surnames were given accidentally by their birth, not by their choice or by their own effort. We should humble ourselves and realize that even marriage is not merely our free choice, but a sort of destiny in a broader sense. Certainly, there are some disadvantages resulting from changing our surnames after marriage, but how can we overcome obstacles, difficulties and trials in life without considering them as a sort of destiny? We should remember we cannot always have our own way and make an effort to improve the situation. To overcome difficulties in life, a strong family tie can be a source of energy. Usually, the man has the responsibility to protect his family and his wife should serve her husband. To enjoy a good family life, the spirit of service and sacrifice is essential. How can we keep a strong family tie without having a single surname as a symbol of unity? Whose surname should be chosen depends on who takes the ultimate responsibility as the family representative to the outside world. When a man's surname is chosen, he must assume the ultimate and greatest responsibility even in crises. Then he can really be a man. A woman can really be a wife by giving up her surname with sacrificial love.

If both husband and wife insist on keeping their own surnames as individuals even after marriage, our family system will easily collapse. Then our society will lose its vigor and deteriorate sooner or later. It is said that the crime rate for murder and sexually-related crimes is very high where individualism is prevalent. Though there is a current controversy, we should not be hasty and thoughtless, but try to deepen our thinking and seek for wisdom for a better future. We should remember that this issue has vital importance for all of us.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

May 7 Message (Subject #307)

A number of islands in East Asia are the subject of disputes between neighboring nations, including Japan and Russia, Japan and Korea, the Philippines and China and others. The legal status of the Ryûkyû Islands is no longer in dispute but the status of American military bases located in Okinawa Prefecture has become a matter of dispute between various government bodies. The problem is also viewed differently by the residents of Okinawa and those living in other prefectures. It was over a hundred years ago that the Ryûkyû Islands were officially incorporated into Japan, but they have been generally neglected by the central government. The site of bloody battles of the Pacific War, military bases have continued to occupy a large portion of the land after the end of the war. What do you think about the Okinawa problem? Have you been to Okinawa? If you have, what were your impressions? What should be done about the bases there? Are they still needed? Should they be closed or moved to other areas?

When I hear or read the name "Okinawa", I recall with sadness the disastrous scene on the island toward the end of World War II. There were many American warships in the bay, smoke from shells exploding in the sky and a few Japanese suicide planes aiming to crash into American warships. Many high school students, both male and female, were dead, voluntarily or involuntarily, having been led by the mistaken judgment of Japanese military leaders. I feel deep hatred for those leaders who misled many innocent people on the island.

These days, the Okinawa problem has been discussed by persons from various fields. This seems to be the direct result of the brutal actions of some American soldiers. Such actions would only be permitted on the battlefields during wartime. Soldiers might be apt to commit such deeds during a war, but now it is peaceful and such actions should not be permitted today.

The island of Okinawa might be very important in strategic planning. Various opinions should be exchanged, related to this problem. However, the most important thing is to have a moral education program for those soldiers who tend to commit such crimes. Education is most important here, also.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

Once I worked for the Ministry of Home Affairs for a fairly long time, so I traveled all over the country on official business. But I never got to Okinawa because, at that time, the region was not yet restored to our country. Therefore, it had been my long-cherished desire to visit there until five years ago, when I had a chance for the first time to realize that desire.

I was fascinated with the boundless expanse of the deep-blue ocean, the dazzlingly beautiful sight of Shuri-jō Castle and the unsophisticated, kind attitude of the residents. But once I stepped into the remains of hard-fought battlefields, such as Mabuni-no-oka or Himeyuri-no-to, I felt awestruck, thinking of the lamentable victims who were of my own generation.

Okinawa was the only place where land-battles occurred in Japan during the last war. As I have often mentioned in this periodical, I witnessed the terrible sight in Hiroshima, but the disastrous scene in Okinawa was of quite a different nature. The number of Japanese war dead was more than 240,000 (military: 150,000; civilians: 90,000), and over

12,000 Americans (all military). Tears streamed ceaselessly down my cheeks when I heard the story of the Himeyuri Unit, organized by schoolgirls who took part in real combat operations, most of whom died, but never surrendered.

Lieutenant-General Ota, a commander of the defense forces determined to experience an honorable death and sent a farewell telegram to the Vice-Minister of the Navy Department, in which he wrote: "After the enemy began an invasion of Okinawa Island, we, the army and navy, have concentrated on defensive action and have been able to show little regard for the inhabitants. The prefectural citizens fought bravely. I hope the government will give them thoughtful consideration in the future." After he finished his remaining business, he stabbed himself with a sword.

At the outset, I mentioned that I was fascinated with the beauty of Okinawa, but at the same time, I was pained by the actual circumstances of the military bases. Mr. Ota, the governor of Okinawa Prefecture, is a survivor of the "Blood-and-Iron Royalists", a unit organized by normal school students. He is a pacifist by nature and presents his view in a way that carries conviction.

In 1879, the Meiji government demanded that the Ryûkyû government surrender Shuri-jō Castle and incorporated the Ryûkyû Islands into Japan as a prefecture, called "Ryûkyû-shobu" (disposal). Sixty-six years later, our government deserted the area like a lizard that cut off its own tail. What we should do at present is to understand the thinking of the people of Okinawa and to show our good faith. We must carry out the dying wish of Lieutenant-General Ota, who sincerely desired tranquility for the area and the people living there.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I have visited Okinawa with my friends. I visited the place where many

people died during the war. I feel sad when I recall that sight. Although I did nothing to promote the war, still I feel guilty.

About the Okinawa bases, they were and are needed because I cannot imagine the kind of development in Japan during the last fifty years occurring without the help of America. But I would say we should be more considerate of the people who live there because their situation and thinking is different than ours. There will be a problem about moving the bases, however.

I remember the words of a taxi driver. He said the people of Okinawa were bewildered after the return of the islands to Japan and consider the result half-good and half-bad. He wanted all Japanese to have a deeper understanding of Okinawa. I cannot forget his truthful words.(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Governor Masahide Ota laments that most Japanese, except for Okinawans, tend to turn a blind eye to the serious inconveniences Okinawans have suffered since the end of the war. According to a newspaper report, Okinawans hail an independent panel's rejection of a government request for "emergency use" of a privately-owned parcel of land at a U. S. military facility on which the lease had expired. While Okinawans appeal for "no bases on Okinawa", the government is intensifying its efforts to gain a stronger hand in lease matters. More difficulties will confront us Japanese over the issue of so-called security of the nation.

First, we have to ask, "What is 'security'?" It seems a generally accepted idea that the U. S. military presence keeps peace in Japan and the surrounding areas. But I dare to challenge the accuracy of that idea. I remember that some North Korean defectors to South Korea gave testimony to the effect that North Korea's aim in developing missiles was

to attack the U. S. forces stationed in Japan. Doesn't this testimony mean that the U. S. military presence on Japanese islands is a threat to peace instead of providing security? When I recall a famous maxim that a good offense is the best defense, I cannot help but doubt the truth of the generally-accepted idea about the security provided by the U. S. military. Isn't it a popular fallacy that the U. S. military will defend Japan in case of a military attack? Who is going to attack Japan? What for? In my view, it has become only an obsolete way of solving disputes between any nations to throw their sword into the scale, in view of the recent extreme sophistication of military technology all over the world. Friendly relations should be the key word governing international diplomacy. Who dares to attack their dear friends or benefactors? Here lies the truth of security.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

I have visited Okinawa three times. I went to the Imperial Palace, the ruined castle called Nakagusuku, the museum of World War II, Ishigaki Island, Yonagumi Island, Miyako Island, and so on.

Okinawa has a peculiar atmosphere. The architecture of the Imperial Palace was influenced by Chinese architecture. A dragon is the symbol of the Imperial Palace. The food in Okinawa is similar to Chinese food, because Ryûkyû (the former name of Okinawa) was ruled not only by Japan, but also by China. I tasted strange food there that I had never had on the mainland. For example, pickled pig's ears, fried bitter cucumber with *tôfu*, and so on. Most of the food was more greasy than that on the mainland.

If I have an opportunity to visit there again, I would like to visit Kume Island. (HIROMI FURUTA, Kita, Nagoya)

A few decades ago, a business trip by means of a two-propeller-driven CAT

(Chinese Air Transport) airplane took me to the Ryûkyû Islands, which constitute Okinawa Prefecture, south of the Amami Islands, centered in the island of Okinawa, which is separated from the rest of Japan. Through the irony of fate, I was engaged in advertising stringed and percussion musical instruments which the company I worked for handled. (A few years ago, I retired from that company in which I had worked for several decades, having reached the retirement age.)

Because the principal city of Naha, the capital of the prefecture, was also the seat of the U. S. military government and the native Ryûkyû government, it was reasonable for me to work with the broadcasting stations and newspaper publishers to present the finest kind of advertising for the U. S. forces stationed at Kadena Air Base.

Fortunately, while staying there, I was able to visit the Okinawa Memorial Park, where the remains of 12,500 Americans and a quarter-million Japanese who suffered greatly in the Pacific War, especially during the full onslaught of the allied invasion which began April 10, 1945, are enshrined. One day, I stood outside the fence of Kadena Air Force Base, which occupied a large percentage of Okinawan land, silently watching the whirring departure and landing of B-52 bombers with their mammoth bodies. The U. S. Air Force stationed in Okinawa, including Kadena, is said to be the largest and strongest in the world.

Controversial issues have generated friction between the local populace and the U. S. military. The bulldozing of village homes and agricultural land sparked resistance which proved futile but invited attention to the problem. For many Okinawans, major issues remain: part of the second largest city in the prefecture, after Naha, is still partly occupied by the Kadena U. S. Air Force Base; Ryûkyû natives are not at liberty

to use their own land even now, fifty years after the end of fighting; the removal of nuclear weapons and the reduction of American bases on their land.

The *Miyako Mainichi* newspaper reported that the *Chûnichi* newspaper in Nagoya exposed the possibility of moving the U. S. forces of Kadena to Shichi-tô Island, also in the Ryûkyûs. The people of Shichi-tô began to worry about U. S. military forces entering their land. This raised a question about the justification of the U. S. military still being stationed on those islands more than fifty years after the war. It was the first time for this criticism to be raised outside of Okinawa.

The main problem is that much of the general public has been indifferent about these controversial issues, isn't it? (JAIME IWAI, Owariasahi)

When I was twenty years old, I worked for Kyoto Prefecture, but after one year I decided to quit the job and determined to go to the Dutch East Indies. I visited the section chief's house to say farewell. He encouraged me and told of his recent experience in Okinawa. He said the Okinawans were a very warm-hearted people and enjoyed their native songs and dances.

During the war in Makassar, I noticed a group of new recruits. They had stout bodies but extremely short legs. Afterward, I learned they were Okinawan fishermen who had settled there for many years. After the war, we were forced to live in a concentration camp and Okinawans lived in a separate house. About once a month, we joined together with them for some amusement. Some Okinawans made a simple musical instrument using a can and a leather cord and played it. Because no women were in the camp, some Okinawan men put rice-powder make-up on their sun-tanned faces and played the roll of women. All of us watching burst into laughter.

But during the war, the land of Okinawa turned into a battlefield. The land was completely destroyed and many Okinawans were killed or injured and since then some of their land has been used as a U. S. air base. The discontent of the Okinawan people has erupted. They are asking for the immediate return of their land. But the U. S. A. replied that they need the base until peace comes to Asia. When will peace come? Who can say? I fully sympathize with the Okinawans!

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

An unfortunate incident which took place in Okinawa last year developed into a big problem involving both Japan and the United States. Almost every day we hear a report relating to Okinawa. Under such conditions, I was a little hesitant to go there, but in early February, I visited Okinawa for the first time.

In spite of it being the coldest season in Honshû, cherry trees were in full bloom and as far as sightseeing spots were concerned, everything in sight was peaceful—even the former battlefield turned into a memorial park. The ocean viewed from that hill was calm and peaceful. It was almost impossible to find traces of the tragic war. But when I visited the Tower of Himeyuri, I became more emotional than I had expected. Everything displayed there reminded me of sad experiences we had nearly fifty years ago. If they had not been involved in a terrible war, they would be enjoying themselves as we are now. Thinking about this almost made me cry. I felt very sorry for them all and offered a silent prayer in my mind.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

"The wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy." (James 3:17)

Essay on Subject #299 ("24 Seasons") received too late to be included in "Echoes" #52

When I heard this theme given in the "Daily Word" telephone message, I wondered what it meant. I must confess that I didn't know the term, *24 sekki*, though I knew the names of some of them. I am ashamed of my ignorance.

So, I went to a nearby library and consulted an encyclopedia. According to its explanation, the *24 sekki* are related to climatic changes following the lunar calendar, but the dates in the lunar calendar do not coincide with the climate. These 24 names are closely related to the climate and to our traditional Japanese thinking.

The names really stimulate old and peaceful feelings in me. It is very regrettable for us Japanese to be losing these names and for me to have been living in ignorance about them.

Since listening to the "Daily Word" message about the *24 sekki*, I have tried to be conscious of them. I greatly appreciate the messages.

(TOSHIYUKI KOTERAZAWA, Kasugai)

Once again, I wish to express my thanks to those who contributed essays to this 53rd issue of "Daily Word" Echoes. Among the 19 writers of the 58 essays included in it, there is one first-timer.

To accompany the statistics given in the accompanying column, over the 14 years since the first issue of "Daily Word" Echoes was published, 102 writers have submitted a total of 2732 essays. I hope the writers learn from the corrections I have made and that all readers enjoy reading them as much as I have.

(C.O.)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF "DAILY WORD"

1/1/79 "Daily Word"s predecessor, *Kyô no Messeji*, (0566-52-2732) in Japanese began from Takahama Church using "answer phone" machine (book of these daily messages, *Kokoro no Sanpô-michi*, published December 1994 by *Kirisuto Shinbunsha*)

9/1/80 "Daily Word" (052-794-6422) began from Nagoya residence using same method

4/26/81 First meeting of listeners

10/3/81 Began sending out printed copies of messages

8/29/82 First issue of "Daily Word" Echoes"

9/21/83 Second telephone/"answer" phone installed to handle more calls

2/1/86 Telephones purchased by NTT; "Daily Word" became NTT service, taped/transmitted on NTT equipment

1/88 "Daily Word" messages introduced into NTT's CAPTAIN system

1/89 *Daily Word*, textbook for university students, published (Hokuseido)

12/90 "Daily Word" messages introduced into the English Forum of NIFTY Serve computer network

1/91 *Ofuna- Hakase no Deiri- Wado*, high school text, published (Biseisha)

10/30/92 Messages began to be recorded on chip instead of on tape; must be called in daily

1/93 "Daily Word" messages became available in Braille at St. Michael's English Library for the Blind (Kobe)

10/93 Japanese translations of messages from NIFTY-Serve made available for general listeners/readers

3/96 On Internet (NAMOS home page): <http://www.namos.co.jp/clark/>

June 30, 1996 = message #5396; Weekly copy #751; "Daily Word" Echoes #53; Listeners Meeting #63; Total number of calls (8/80-5/95): 752,878; Average per day: 134; Record number of calls in one day: 5224 (1/14/88)