

"Daily Word" Echoes

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(Essays submitted by listeners/readers on themes of "Daily Word" messages between July 2 and August 6, 1996. Corrected and edited by Clark Offner.)

July 2 Message (Subject #308)

A famous parable of Jesus, found in the 10th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, is commonly called the Good Samaritan. A teacher of the Jewish law had tried to trap Jesus with the question about how to gain eternal life. Jesus asked the legal specialist what he thought and then commended him on his correct answer (to love God above all else and to love your neighbor as yourself) and urged him to obey those basic commandments. Then the man, wanting to justify himself, asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor". The answer implied in Jesus' parable is that any person in need is our neighbor, regardless of where he or she lives. The theme for our meeting last Sunday was "My Neighborhood". Those present gave descriptions of the neighborhoods in which they live. That is the theme for listeners/readers who wish to write an essay. What kind of neighborhood do you live in? Physically, geographically, is it a pleasant, convenient place to live? Do you have much social contact with your neighbors? Has the neighborhood changed during the time you have lived there?

I have met many neighbors since I was born, but I cannot forget the Kajiwara family who lived next door to us in Sendai, more than 50 years ago. They were a gray-haired lady, her daughter,

Shio, and younger son, Iwao. Shio seemed to be about thirty years old. Rev. Kajiwara, their father, had died a few years before we moved to Sendai from Aomori. His family welcomed us as tenants. They were very pious Christians. Shio San was a very good gardener, cook and nurse to her mother and brother, who had epilepsy. Two other sisters had married, but she remained at home to take care of her old mother and sick brother.

Iwao San was thin and pale, but he was usually cheerful. He used to sing to himself the hymn (#503), *Kari iruru hi wa chikashi, Yorokobi mote, Sono tariho*. He used to come to my school and took a picture of my running on the playground. He taught me how to make a wreath of clover. Sometimes, he surprised us, shouting loudly and rolling over wherever he was. Their mother died in April 1938, soon after our father's death on March 12. I remember that my sister and I stayed overnight with this kind family for three days until our father's funeral was over.

After their mother's death, the sister and brother lived by themselves for several years. It was in 1943, when the course of the Pacific War became worse for Japan, that Iwao San died after falling into the fire he was making in the yard. This accident was a great shock for me. Also in our family, our brother was in the army to learn the art of war. Our family and Shio San helped each other. We sometimes escaped into the same bomb shelter, sharing food or sewing thread. Soon after the Pacific War was

over, Shio San moved to Tokyo to get married and we expressed our congratulations. Before she moved to Tokyo, my eldest sister purchased the house we were living in. Shio San's big, old house became her nephew's residence. Our neighborhood changed. I lived there with my sister and mother for a few years.

After I became independent, I met many neighbors, moving very often. Almost all of them were nice to me. I also tried to be nice to them, but I had to say good-bye to each of them after a short time. I always remember the Bible teaching, "Love thy neighbor as thyself". And I have fond memories of the Kajiwara family, my first neighbors, and also of Sendai. (KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

I lived in the city of Hamamatsu with my family until I was twenty years old. It was a residential zone in the suburbs which was quiet, spacious and close to nature, but the area has changed now. Natural surroundings disappeared, little by little. Many houses were built and it is now called a high-class area. I am disappointed every time I visit there. There is no longer a nice atmosphere like the old days.

I can also write about Nagoya. I came here after the war. Certainly, here also, natural surroundings have been lost, but I love my neighborhood because of its very warm human relationships. I want to have a warm heart like others, even though Nagoya is a large rural district.

I will mention another neighborhood: Japan's neighbors that are across the sea. I visited Hong Kong from June 3rd to 6th this year. I heard about the difficult situation from a young man who guided us. He told us that he will go to Beijing after Hong Kong is returned to China. He said that he will not be able to freely express himself there. I cannot forget his words. My outlook while there was changed by his words. I do not know

how China will act in the future, but there are many people who are pressed to make difficult decisions. This makes my heart gloomy and I pray for God's mercy on those who live in Hong Kong.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

We have a proverb: "A neighbor at hand is better than a brother far off." In fact, neighborly relations and social obligations greatly differ between rural and urban communities. In rural districts an old type of communal life survives to a certain degree. Having very close relations among themselves, neighbors provide mutual help in farming, fishing or performing ceremonies. Punishment for neglecting obligations and disturbing social order used to be the discontinuance of all relations with the offender (*mura-hachibu*). Recently, modernization has brought about a decline in this type of community. In cities and public housing developments where people with different cultural backgrounds live, one's relations with other members of the community tend to be estranged. We should keep friendly relations with neighbors. The proverb noted above teaches this principle. But, at the same time, there is nothing so difficult as relations with neighbors.

In former days, there was the idea of mutual help also in urban life. For example, adults used to scold their neighbors' children, considering it their social obligation. But today, they seldom do that for fear of being criticized by the children's parents. The reason for this tendency, I think, is a false individualism which is widespread in our society today. In cities, especially in apartment complexes, people do not want to know their neighbors nor to experience interference by others.

Recently I heard the word "kôen (park) debut" and was told that it connotes the difficulty of young mothers' association with other mothers when

they step into a nearby park with their small children for the first time. I can easily imagine the distress of young mothers who are not adept at keeping company with others.

Young people these days have no regard for the trouble they cause others and, at the same time, have not had to suffer themselves, which are the main reasons for the aggravation of neighbor relations. So-called *pet-kôgai* (pet pollution) is a serious subject of discussion today. Cats and dogs invade a neighbor's garden and cause damage. They may be lovely pets for their owners, but they are nothing but hateful trespassers to the neighbor. The cries of pets at night are also a nuisance to neighbors, but ordinary people do not have the courage to complain to the owner.

Last year I served as the manager of my neighborhood association and realized many problems in the neighborhood. Such associations work for a favorable living environment and the welfare of members. They coordinate festivals, sports and various kinds of cultural activities which may be, in effect, attempts to retrieve the community spirit which is now lost. In large cities, I hear, even such an association is hard to establish. People should know that they cannot live for themselves alone in this world. (MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I desired to live in a quiet residential area for many years because I used to live in a downtown area that was crowded and noisy until late in the evening. My dream came true when we purchased a small piece of land and built a correspondingly small house on it about ten years ago. I was happy to have the city library and the best-known sight-seeing spot for cherry blossoms in Handa a five-minute walk from my house.

At that time, there were many vacant lots here and there. Almost all houses were built in the Japanese style

and had one or two stories. They also had gardens. The size of the gardens depended on the time when the land was purchased. Those who bought land earlier had larger gardens and others who bought it later had smaller ones. Our garden was the smallest when we moved here. Those who came after us could not spare the space to have a garden.

The number of the vacant lots gradually decreased and new houses emerged in the meantime. When a two-storied blue building suddenly appeared in our block, I was shocked at the color and style of the building that did not fit in with the surrounding houses at all. This building was a small gym that had some athletic equipment in it. I got mad and cursed the owner and his bad taste.

Soon after that, an apartment house, a so-called "mansion", was built. I found it disgusting because it was a square, dark brown, four-storied ugly building that destroyed a good view and the atmosphere of this residential area. However, my anger began to subside when I saw that young people living in this apartment house seemed to be decent and said "Good morning" to me every time I met them at the garbage pickup area. Since I made friends with a young Korean couple who live there, I don't care now how the building looks.

From April of this year, it is our turn to be community leaders. On the "Clean-up Day" of our community, we weeded the nearby playground and cleaned the ditches on both sides of the road. Mr. K., a retired, quiet man, was very cooperative and worked hard. He helped me a great deal. I heard that his brother was the owner of the gym. Then my hostility toward this odd building instantly softened.

I think people feel comfortable when they get along with their neighbors, no matter how the surroundings look. The human factor plays the biggest role to decide whether or not they have a

good neighborhood. If people don't get along with their neighbors, they wouldn't say that they had a good neighborhood no matter how quiet and clean it was and no matter how many good public facilities it had.

In Japan, they say the best way of keeping a good relationship with neighbors is *tsukazu hanarezu*, meaning "don't be close and don't be distant". I agree with this saying. Now that I have a good neighborhood, I will keep this saying in mind and will put some distance between me and my neighbors to maintain continuously peaceful contacts with them. (NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

I live near the Yagoto intersection in Nagoya. The Yagoto area is favored with natural beauty and cultural assets. There are many temples, shrines, churches, schools, universities, a health rehabilitation center, banks, post offices, a library and hospitals, especially the Red Cross Hospital, which is very large and accepts patients day or night.

Jusco is a large supermarket nearby. I go for a walk and stop in at the supermarket to go shopping at the same time. It takes about one hour, including shopping, to go there and return. I enjoy standing and reading books at the bookstore on the 4th floor of Jusco. Of course, sometimes, I buy books there.

You have probably heard of the famous, large temple, Yagoto Kôshôji, so I would like to write about it. The principal Buddhist image enshrined there is named Daizui Gû Myô-ô which, reportedly, can cure incontinence. Another Buddha, Fudô Myô-ô, is said to have the remarkable power to prevent such tragedies as traffic accidents.

Festivals are held on the 5th and 13th day of every month. On those days, many people visit the temple. It is said that people who visit the temple every month can keep their private parts

healthy even in old age. Many stalls are open on the festival days.

(MIEKO OKUMURA, Mizuho, Nagoya)

"Who is my neighbor?" Not necessarily the people who live next door. Our next door neighbors are the Yamanouchis. The husband is kind enough to plant pretty flowers even in a part of our garden and we do appreciate his kindness, but, honestly speaking, I do not think they are my neighbors. To me, "neighbors" are people who need my help and who I want to befriend.

Those who need my help are my family members, students and colleagues, although I often need their help as well. Since I am often helped, I am ready to help them whenever I am available. Some of those people do not help me, including my children and some of my students, but they can encourage me with an expression of appreciation on their faces when I help them. Then, why do I want to help them? Partly because of my obligation, but largely because I want to be their friend. The American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, once wrote, "The only way to have a friend is to be one."

Now "friends" seem to be identical with "neighbors", but these people are not always "friendly" to me. Some of my friends or neighbors were rather cold to me at first, but as I tried to help or serve them in some way, they turned out to be among my neighbors. Once they have become my "neighbors", I am ready to help them as much as possible.

There were and are some people I cannot help hating, but I would like to be their neighbor. My innate character may say, "No, you cannot", but I know there is one way it is possible. That is to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for us all and rose again three days later. Through him, I'm sure I can make friends even with those I hate. Thinking of our past, we will soon notice that we

have committed many sins, but those sins have been forgiven through our faith in Him. Since we have been forgiven, we are also expected to forgive anyone who has done us harm.

At present, I am ready to help those who say they need my help and they are all my friends, but I hope I will be able to become the neighbor even of those who may hate me through the help of Jesus Christ.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

There is no neighborhood in the place where we live because our house is located on the way to Kakuzan Park, which belongs to Tsuyama City, so our house has been standing by itself for more than fifty years. Fortunately a policeman patrols this area every night since a few years ago, but we have never met nor seen him. Even though it is their job, we are grateful to the patrolmen. On the south and east of our house is the site of the old castle, which has been converted into a public garden.

Some years ago, some exhibitions at a corner of the Tsuyama Christian Library were stolen on a rainy night. Since then, we installed a security bell there and in our house also. I set it every night before I go to bed. The head of our community is very kind to us and we have been able to live in a quiet place for a long time. We are thankful to him and to our God. (TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

I live in a rural area and most of our neighbors are farmers. Thirteen households make up our neighborhood group. The most important job of the group is to carry out funeral ceremonies without any problem. The head of the group is designated chairman of a funeral ceremony and other members should give their support.

The services offered by the group are the following: Reception—receiving obituary offerings and preparing a list of

donors; Cooking—preparing food for 300 relatives, classmates of the bereaved family and others in attendance; Packaging—putting a box of sugar, a can of juice and mushrooms into about 600 paper bags in return for the obituary offerings; Serving—serving the prepared food and even alcoholic beverages to those in attendance; Traffic Control—directing cars to the parking lot. About 100 people participate in these supporting activities on the day and the previous night of a funeral.

Nowadays, it is difficult to take off two days for the ceremony. Recently, I attended a funeral ceremony in an urban area. It was held at a community center in a simple and rational way. Our rural, time-consuming methods must be changed as soon as possible.

The other job of the neighborhood group is maintaining roads. Now, all roads have been paved so we only cut branches that extend over the roads or mow the grass. Twenty years ago, these roads were not paved and we used to work on them all day long. (YOSHIHISA KAWAHARA, Mihama, Aichi)

While my husband was working for the government as an official, we were allowed to live in a government house. When he retired in 1965, our doomsday arrived. We had to leave there and find a house of our own. Even then, real estate in Tokyo was so expensive that we did not expect to live in one of the 23 wards of Tokyo. Very fortunately, however, we were able to find a small house on leased land at a reasonable price, very close to the government house we had lived in for four years until then and had to leave. We have now lived here in Meguro Ward, Tokyo, for a total of 35 years.

While my boys were students at the junior high school in the community, I naturally made friends with mothers of their friends and others in the neighborhood, but after they left that community

school and entered a senior high school far away, I found that such ties became weaker year after year. In 1974, when I was suddenly asked to assume the position of a volunteer welfare worker, I was very surprised, but I thought that since we had decided to make our home here, it was necessary for us to have good relationships with our neighbors and accepted the position. I continued with that job for 21 years until I retired in 1995. In 1977, I became a volunteer probation officer and am still active in that job. Even now, I am involved with many activities in the community and leading quite a busy life. These activities are all quite tedious but important, nonetheless. I can learn much through that job and urge myself to fulfill my responsibilities as faithfully as possible.

Meguro, where I live, is situated in the southwest part of Tokyo proper. The population is about 240,000, down from 190,000, now ranking #14. The ratio of senior citizens and single-member households is high, as in other areas of Tokyo. Foreign resident registration is about 8,000. I remember when I was a child, Meguro had quite a rural air, especially the comic story, "A Mackerel Pike In Meguro The Shogun Was Fond Of", is very famous. Now, it is known as a residential district near the heart of Tokyo. Compared with other wards of Tokyo, its amenity is good, I hear. Even in my neighborhood, many houses are being pulled down and replaced with condominiums and apartment buildings.

We Japanese used to form communities in which we befriended one another and cooperated when in need, but we cannot expect to have that kind of situation today in the midst of such drastic social and economic changes. Yet, we need to make every possible effort to improve the situation. Even though there still are many problems to be solved, I wish to say that the level of welfare services, recycling and various kinds of

community services provided by the ward office have risen greatly with the collaboration of the citizens. I realize this through my job. For example, we appreciate those people who offer the space in front of their private residences as waste collection points, try to separate the waste orderly when they think it necessary and work to keep the area clean.

I was not born in Meguro, but since I came to live here, I would like to love my neighborhood and lead a happy life with my neighbors.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

In my neighborhood, there is a nice park and next to it, on a hill, is the Tobe Shrine surrounded by trees. This is my favorite place for walking and exercising in the morning. I refresh myself with the rising sun, the fresh air and the chirping of birds. It is also a joy for me to observe the ever-changing trees, plants and flowers. All of them really comfort me.

In the park, I encountered a group of senior citizens following NHK's radio exercise program at 6:30 in the morning. Stranger that I was, I greeted an older man and asked if I might join them. He welcomed me, saying, "We're happy to have as many people as enjoy it". I was pleased to hear that. The next morning, I reached the place a little earlier and was standing there with happy anticipation. But a woman came later and said to me, "This is my place. Everyone has their own particular place". Greatly embarrassed, I moved to the opposite side of the area. I wondered, is this a kind of territorial instinct of animals? I had never known such a sense of territory as existed there. Another time, a man exercising behind me abruptly whispered to me: "Néchan, step forward a little." Unwillingly, I did as he said, but his impolite manner made me sad.

One day when the exercise was over, I thanked an elderly man who brought his radio every morning for us. He smiled and said, "I'm just repaying the favors I have received from others for many years. This is what I can do now." I was moved greatly, felt happy and my heart was warmed.

These are some experiences associated with my new neighbors recently.

(SADAE HASHIMOTO, Minami, Nagoya)

The other day, the doorbell rang. I went to the door and found a woman I did not know standing there. She introduced herself and said that she and her family had moved into the neighborhood, three doors away from my house, the previous day. She expressed the hope that we would have good neighborly relations and I said the same to her. This was the second such experience I have had recently. Several days before, I exchanged similar greetings with strangers who appeared at my door. They also were newcomers.

I noticed that three new houses had been built on a plot of land after an elderly couple who had lived there for many years departed some time ago. That plot of land, formerly occupied by only two persons, has come to be inhabited by several people. This is an example of a recent trend for residential areas like mine to become more densely populated.

My family and I were newcomers here nearly fifteen years ago. When we looked for a new residence in the western suburbs of Tokyo, a couple of our conditions were that it be in a quiet, residential area not too far from a train station. After ruling out a few other possibilities, we came across the present place and decided to settle here because it met the above conditions.

On holidays, young children play merrily on the street in front of my house. It is quite pleasing to hear their cheerful voices. Sometimes, one of them rings my doorbell and asks me to let him

into my yard to bring back a ball which happened to stray off course. I am willing to respond favorably. "Thank you." "Not at all." I am happy to exchange such words.

Before coming to this neighborhood, we heard that it was a fairly high-class residential area, but as time passes, we have come to realize that the area is only inhabited by ordinary people, except for a few prominent persons living here and there. That is not what matters, however. We are satisfied with the amiable people who live in our neighborhood.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

It was not until I had two children that I really realized the importance of the neighborhood and came to appreciate my neighbors in relation to raising my children. I have been helped by many neighbors. Now my children are elementary school pupils, but we still have occasions when we can't do without neighbors' cooperation.

This year, I'm one of the members of the association for children and we are now very busy preparing for the summer festival, making an *omikoshi* for the children's parade. Beside this festival, we have many annual events such as the Bon Dance, physical exercise in the nearby park during summer vacation, the traditional festival of the local shrine in the fall, a joyful Christmas gathering, a welcome party for the new first graders and a farewell party for the graduating sixth graders. Those events cannot be done by one family alone and by joining with others, children can learn various things which they can't get at school or in their own families. It's said that the neighborhood raises children as well as their parents, *Chiiki ga ko o sodateru*.

We have another saying about the neighborhood. "Sometimes your neighbors are more reliable and helpful than your relatives living far away." *Tôku no*

shinseki yori, chikaku no tanin. If suddenly something bad happens to you, it's your neighbors that can give the fastest aid. And we should remember that such quick and warm aid cannot be given unless we maintain good relationships with our neighbors in everyday life.

Compared to the past, especially in the cities, more and more people are paying less attention to their neighborhood. But you and your home are in the center of your neighborhood. So I should think that trying to keep a proper distance from one another, and getting along with neighbors will make life more enjoyable and full of variety.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

July 9 Message (Subject #309)

Among ancient peoples, communication over a distance was sometimes accomplished by beating on a drum or sending smoke signals. During the past two centuries, telegraph/telephone communication has been transmitted over electric wires. Then "wireless" electrical communication was developed. Originally, "wireless" was used for radio or wireless telegraphy, but nowadays, we often hear a bell ring in a device carried in someone's pocket and see people speaking into a device along the street, in private cars, public transportation vehicles or other public places. Such wireless pocket bells and cellular telephones have become very popular in Japan these days. Many listeners or readers have probably had some experiences with them—either using them, being irritated by them, wanting to have them, etc. What do you think of such devices? What are their advantages or disadvantages? Have you

made use of them or do you plan to do so in the future?

Human beings have directed their efforts to long-distance communication from of old. Dr. Offner mentioned drum beats and smoke signals as examples. The traditional Japanese method was a signal fire. A rocket was sent aloft as a signal of something. Wireless telegraphy, invented by Marconi in the early part of this century, was epoch-making. During the war, when I was a middle-school boy, we were taught signs corresponding to teach *kana* syllable used in wireless telegraphy. Maybe the military thought that it would be necessary when we became combatants. By the way, flag signaling was another essential subject for us boys to learn during the war.

The invention of the telephone was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable events in the history of science. The appearance of wireless telephones was also beyond my poor scientific imagination. About ten years ago, I happened to ride in the car of the president of a private company and was surprised to see him make a telephone call in the car. It might have been at the beginning of the age of wireless telephones. After that, the modern convenience has spread rapidly. Today, it is a common convenience. In keeping with its proliferation, the price is decreasing day by day; it is no longer an unattainable product. It is very popular now. As a result, the wireless telephone system has begun to exert a negative influence upon our daily lives.

Some people use the wireless telephone on the street or in public transportation vehicles. These ways of using telephones is unpardonable. If they have to use them in public, they should do so out of sight of others, if possible. Some people talk into it while walking or sit-

ting in a seat of a bus or train. The most inadmissible use of the device is while driving a car. This is very dangerous because, as a matter of course, they cannot concentrate their attention on driving. Actually many accidents are reported as a result. I hear that an amendment of the Road Traffic Act is already under investigation to prohibit such foolish acts, which I think is quite natural.

I have no intention of obtaining a wireless telephone for the time being. First of all, I seldom go anyplace where I cannot find a telephone. The only occasion which comes to my mind when I might need one is when I drive my own car and cannot reach my destination on time, being caught in a traffic jam. But I will not have such an experience even once a year. Moreover, I can avoid such an emergency by starting early. Wireless telephones are sold very cheaply now. Some shops sell them for ten yen. But in order to use the device, we must be prepared to pay a subscription charge and a monthly fee in addition to the original price. This device may continue to be a nonessential item for me, even in the future.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

At home, we still use a heavy, black, old-style telephone. On such a device, you don't want to dial 0 many times. You, of course, have to re-dial from the beginning after hearing a busy signal. If you use it for longer than ten minutes, your wrist starts complaining about its weight. You have to cover the receiver with your hand when you don't want to be heard at the other end of the line.

At the office, I use a modern push button phone with many convenient functions. There is no difference in the time it takes to dial a 0 and a 1. The re-dial button saves a lot of time. The light-weight receiver makes a long conversation easier. The music button assures you that you are not heard.

However, my progress related to communication devices stops here. I have never used a wireless telephone. I understand it is a useful gadget for some people, but not for me. I don't mean I agree with the Luddites who destroyed machinery during the industrial revolution two hundred years ago. I am not allergic to new technologies. I just don't like the feeling of being linked with others all the time. I do not like being disturbed when I want to be alone.

Nevertheless, whether I like it or not, it seems that the time has come to buy a new telephone for our home. The other day, my daughter said her friend froze when she tried to use our telephone. She could not figure out what to push for she had never before used a dial phone. I don't remember when it was that all the old public telephones were replaced by push-button phones.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Yokohama)

My son uses a cellular telephone with which he can call from a long distance. It is convenient for people who are in an emergency situation. I have one which can be used only in my house. I take it with me everywhere in the house so I can make use of it immediately. If I do not have it with me, perhaps I cannot answer the phone until it rings fifteen times even though I run to it as quickly as I can.

I had little interest in cellular telephones until I heard today's "Daily Word" message. I am satisfied with my present telephone and do not want another one. I know, however, that many boys and girls at high school have them and many traffic accidents occur from their misuse. By chance I found a large advertisement in the newspaper about cellular telephones. I feel I have a lack of understanding about the present situation related to cellular telephones and many other things also.

(MICHICO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Cellular telephones are unnecessary for our daily lives. One of their advantages is that they are portable. They may be put in one's pocket and used anywhere. One of the disadvantages is that they disturb people nearby. I have never made use of one and do not plan to do so in the future.

My husband and I are advanced in years and it is difficult for us to use such modern devices as cellular telephones. Recently, I have heard that using cellular telephones may interfere with other electric waves, so I will never use such a telephone even if it is very convenient. We must not be egoists and cause trouble to others. That is an important principle in public morality

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

Like my previous comments related to computers, I do not think that cellular telephones themselves are harmful. Rather, they can be very useful, especially in emergencies. For example, when a relative is seriously ill. One of my colleagues at Chigusa High School told me the other day that he always carries a cellular telephone these days for his father may die at any moment. Many of my students, however, have no need to carry one. What is irritating to me is to see some students walking along the corridor with a cellular telephone at their ear, talking in a loud voice. I have doubts why they do so.

Speaking of cellular telephones, I remember one annoying experience I had when I attended a wedding ceremony in Kagawa, Shikoku. One "sister" at Shiga Church married a "brother" at a Christian Church in Kagawa. During the wedding ceremony, I heard a man talking and laughing into a cellular telephone, which was really shocking to me.

One thing after another is being invented in the hope that it will "benefit" us all, but can they really make our

lives better? We should stop to consider what kind of conveniences are really good for us. If something is found unnecessary, we should refrain from getting it even if everyone else tries to get one.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

Recently we see some people using cellular telephones in *shinkansen* trains and on the street. I presume they are so busy that they want to save time by not going to a public telephone booth. However, I sometimes find them speaking loudly, saying not very important things into cellular telephones on the street. Some of them talk, using this kind of telephone, while they are driving their private cars. Isn't it dangerous for the people walking on the street and for the drivers themselves? Even if they use those conveniences in the train, they must take care not to cause trouble to other passengers who become irritated.

It is regrettable that such modern conveniences as cellular telephones and pocket bells may make people lazy and reluctant to carry telephone cards. But these wireless phones are very helpful for people who have no coins on trains and for doctors or ministers who may receive emergency messages when they are away from their hospitals or churches. I hear that in the near future, in the 21st century in Japan, 1,500,000 people, including adults and children, will have their own cellular telephones. It makes society more complicated and busier. It is awful to think about it.

But residents who live in remote areas of the world need cellular telephones to communicate with people in the next village who are their co-workers where there are no telephone lines. I am sure that cellular telephones will be used effectively by those who really need them.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

Nowadays, I see many people talking on cellular phones in various places, along streets, in trains or offices and so on. They seem convenient and at the same time unsettling. In this essay, however, I would like to consider whether or not they are beneficial as a new technological device.

In general, we should give careful consideration to the use of new technology in relation to the whole system, including cost, convenience, trouble, the energy problem and so on. What at first seems convenient is too often found to be not so. The final decision depends on its practical use over a certain period.

As telephones are a basic, widely-used means of communication, it is important to establish a simple and universal system for their use. So far, cellular telephones are apparently for the specific use of a limited number of people, though I don't know the details. This is the main reason I don't use them. Another reason is that they are too unsettling.

Still, I'm not against new technology. As for a telephone, I often use it just as an answer phone so that I don't have to pick up the receiver immediately. This works well for me.

(TOSHIYUKI KOTERAZAWA, Kasugai)

One day, it surprised me to hear a passerby on the street speaking loudly to himself and laughing rudely. At first, I wondered what was the matter with him, but when I got a closer look at him, I found that he was using a cellular telephone. He looked like he was absorbed in speaking to the other party on the phone. I feared his absorption in talking might cause a serious accident due to carelessness.

It goes without saying that one must not use inflammables near a fire. Similarly, one should not use this convenient device in certain places. In fact, medical equipment in a hospital reportedly stopped functioning because care-

less speakers used that device. Probably they did not know the device used a network of radio stations to pass on signals and that the use of a portable telephone may affect the normal working of electrical appliances.

A fatal accident caused by the use of the sophisticated device was also reported. A man was hit and killed by a truck driver using the cellular telephone while driving. It is out of the question for a driver to use the device while driving. Using the cellular phone is one thing while driving a car is another. You can never pay attention to two different things at the same time. That's how people are made. All drivers should bear this in mind and abstain from using the device no matter how convenient it may be. (SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

The front page of the Asahi Shinbun of August 7th featured news of traffic accidents caused by drivers using cellular telephones. There were 128 accidents resulting in injuries and one resulting in death just during the month of June. The National Police Agency made a nationwide investigation of traffic accidents resulting in injury or death that occurred while a driver was using a cellular telephone. According to this investigation, accidents occurred when the drivers were about to answer the phone in 54 cases (41.9%), when they were about to call in 40 cases (31%), while talking on the phone in 21 cases (16.31%) and when about to turn the phone off in 7 cases (5.4%).

There were no accidents resulting in injuries or deaths due to a regular telephone installed in a car. The National Police Agency considered the probability of accidents resulting from the use of cellular phones to be high and decided to revise the driving rules which are taught to learners. New instructions such as not to use a cellular phone while driving or to turn off the phone before driving

will be added to the textbook. The National Police Agency also is going to make a scientific investigation about drivers' reactions, concentration and coordination while using a telephone.

According to research conducted by Japanese police related to cellular telephone policy abroad, it was found that Switzerland banned the use of cellular phones in cars, except for those that can be used without using one's hands.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunication has been conducting broad research on many issues relating to cars, roads and traffic systems and is going to set up an investigation committee related to cars and electric waves.

In Aichi Prefecture, 16 car accidents resulting from the use of cellular telephones occurred in June. This number was the highest for all Japan. Last year, 70 car accidents occurred in one year in Aichi and this year there were 40 by the end of June. Now that there is increasing use of such phones, the prefectural police department is afraid that serious accidents will result. However, on the prefectural level, neither scientific analysis has been made nor have countermeasures been taken for the time being. Prefectural police have been appealing to drivers to make calls from safe places since mid-June.

I personally don't like cellular telephones no matter how convenient they are. I feel annoyed to see someone talking on the cellular phone walking along the street or sitting on a train. Those who use cellular telephones in public places don't consider the people around them and regard the place where they are as their own. They are not aware that they are invading an area that does not belong to them.

Many young businessmen have cellular telephones provided by their companies. They are supposed to use it even while driving. I think executives should suggest to their subordinates not to an-

swer the phone while driving. Business is important, but life is more important.
(NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

Last November, a young car salesman came to my place to sell me a car when I was thinking of changing my old car for a new one. He visited my house a few times to accomplish his business. Every time he appeared at the entrance, he stood with a cellular telephone in his hand, or in both hands when he didn't have to carry his attaché case. I felt very sorry for him because he was constantly under the control of this electric device. Wherever he might go away from his office building, he could never be free from his boss or his company. He was tied to a telephone wire, although it was wireless.

On his third visit, he was allowed to drive his boss's car to my place so that I could make a trial run of the same type of car I wanted to buy. While I was driving to the ward office to get the documents required to purchase a car, the salesman's cellular telephone began to ring. "What's up?" I asked. "It's from my boss", the salesman answered from the back seat. "He said he was starving because he left his lunch box in this car."

Various kinds of articles regarding cellular telephones appear in the newspaper these days. Some articles show their great benefits. Thanks to communication on cellular telephones, some lives were saved on a river or in the mountains. In the Great Hanshin Earthquake, cellular telephones helped many people in the area communicate over a distance when the usual telephone service was not available. On the other hand, other articles indicated their negative aspects. For example, using them while driving a car has been the cause of many traffic accidents. Their electric waves caused trouble with electronic medical equipment when they were used in hospitals and, as is often said, the manners

of those using phones in public places are sometimes unbelievably bad.

However convenient and helpful cellular telephones may be, I don't feel like having one because I don't like to be interrupted while doing something even when I am out of the house. And when I see people speaking into a device while walking along the street, I cannot help feeling as if we were walking toward an abnormal society.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

Since Alexander Bell invented the telephone in 1876, it has become the most important means of communication. It was introduced into Japan in 1877, only one year after its invention in the U. S. It can transmit the sound of a voice to any receiver on the same line and the line from one telephone can be connected to almost any other telephone in the world.

In 1890, public telephone service was inaugurated in Tokyo and Yokohama, which was some years before the public recognized the importance of the telephone. The demand for telephone service grew with the modernization of the economy. In response to the growing demand and diversity of the telephone, a novel improvement has been made out of necessity: the wireless telephone. "Necessity is the mother of invention."

When we receive a call while taking a bath, we are able to answer immediately from the bathroom. It is also available for anyone, including visitors, to use the portable telephone outside of our house, making it unnecessary for them to enter the house. The other day, a man rang our doorbell and explained to me that he was lost and unsure where he was. I obtained the telephone number of his destination and he understood where to go after talking with someone at his destination by our wireless telephone without entering our house.

On the other hand, there are disadvantages related to wireless telephones. It has recently been reported by the National Police Agency that there were 129 traffic accidents on the road during only one month (alas, Aichi Prefecture, where I live, had the worst record—16 of the 129), which were caused by drivers who were using the telephones in their cars while driving. Most of the accidents were caused by drivers who received a call while driving. As to the kind of accident, rear-end collisions were most common—98 out of the 129. There is no problem with a car telephone that is fixed at a certain place. The problem arises when drivers fumble for a portable telephone while they are driving. It is thought that the attention of most drivers is distracted when a bell rings. They have to look for the portable telephone instead of focusing their attention on their driving. According to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, 12,400,000 portable telephones are now being used throughout the country as of June 1996, i.e., ten percent of the Japanese own a portable telephone. Consequently, troubles related to portable telephones have remarkably increased. On public transportation vehicles, many passengers frown when others talk on a portable telephone or when a calling bell rings. Such a noise may be heard even in a theater. A more serious problem is that the electromagnetic waves from portable telephones interfere with the operation of medical equipment.

The problem that puzzles me is whether or not people are aware of these disadvantages. Can they overcome them? Wireless, portable telephones were developed to make our lives convenient, incorporating high technology, but this technological convenience has backfired.

In conclusion, it is up to those who use wireless telephones to act responsibly. In Switzerland, a new traffic regulation will be issued in September 1996.

Those who use wireless telephones while driving will be liable for a 100 Swiss franc fine. Should there be a stiff fine for Japanese drivers who use wire-less telephones? The "Hello, hello" in a car should be said after bringing the car to a halt. (JAIME IWAI, Owariasahi)

I don't know whether or not I would have used a wireless telephone if my daughter, who had studied in Tokyo for four years, did not bring one home after she graduated from university. Anyway, I'm using it now, thankful for its convenience. When I play the piano while nobody else is at home, I usually bring it to the room where the piano is. If it is necessary to move to the living room while calling, that is possible. It is true that its "wirelessness" brings convenience, but it is also true that the convenience is accompanied by something wrong.

Some months ago, I had a phone call from a woman who is the same age as my daughter. She was my coworker when I was working in that company and she is now the mother of a young son. Still now, after six years have passed since my retirement, she kindly gives me information about the company. When I received her phone call, I was bathing. If we were using the ordinary telephone, my wife would have declined to take her call, saying "my husband is now out for a short walk" or something like that, but she instantly brought the portable telephone to me. As a result, I couldn't help talking for more than fifteen minutes while naked in a small bathroom. It was no problem for me to have remained naked for more than fifteen minutes for the caller had no idea of my situation. But my daughter, who was aware of all that happened, was very displeased with her and I am still not sure why.

These days, I come across young men who are speaking into a device along the street, on the *shinkansen* and even

while driving a car. When I see them, I wonder what they do in their regular offices. We should be very thankful for this convenient device, but we must consider how to use it most appropriately.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

July 16 Message (Subject #310)

Nowadays, there are countless computer games that children, young people or adults become absorbed in at the expense of a healthy social life. As a result, I presume that traditional Japanese board games such as go and shôgi are no longer as popular as before. When I was a child, I sometimes played checkers with my father and chess with my brother. I also played checkers with my children at times when they were young, but I have not played such games for many years. What about you? Do you ever play go or shôgi these days? Did you play them in years gone by? What do you think of these games and their place in Japanese life in the past, the present and the future?

When I was a child, I, sometimes played go or *shôgi* with my father. However, since I became a father, I have never played them with my daughters. As noted in the "Daily Word" message of July 16, they seem to be no longer as popular as before in my home, too.

I cannot think of any special reason for that. Although I am using my personal computer (PC) to write this essay, I don't think I spend too much time with it. There just have been so many kinds of activities these days. Such a

diversity of ways to spend time is likely to be the reason in my case.

Nowadays, many people play *shôgi* on a computer display. You can play it, like many other computer games, by yourself. That is the very point I am concerned about. It's true that the longer time you spend along with your PC, the less you talk with your family or friends.

However, I don't know whether we really sacrifice "a healthy social life" for PCs as was indicated. Some PC fans might say they enjoy "talking" through Internet with their friends. It must be included as a new style of social life. Of course, the question remains whether or not it is healthy.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Yokohama)

Both *go* and *shôgi* are believed to have been introduced into Japan in the 8th century by Japanese envoys and monks to China. *Shôgi* traces its origins all the way back to India or Persia. At first *go* was played by the aristocracy, but from the 13th century its popularity gradually spread. In the Edo era, the shogunate encouraged the playing of these games among common people as intellectual exercises. Today, *go* is enjoyed by 10 million people and *shôgi* by 20 million of all ages from grade school children through retirees. If they are compared, *go* is, if anything, more refined or noble than *shôgi* from a historical viewpoint. In my boyhood, I usually observed adults in the neighborhood enjoying themselves playing *shôgi* on a bench in the summer evening while others were watching the game, standing nearby. *Shôgi* was enjoyed by the common people. On the other hand, *go* was played mainly at clubs where people had to pay to play. Herein I find a difference between the fans of these two games.

Computer games are very popular now, but these games cannot be played without a computer. On the contrary, *go* and *shôgi* can be played very easily. *Go*

and *shôgi*-sets are sold even at the price of a few hundred yen. (Of course, those of good quality cost hundreds of thousands of yen.) Simple sets are convenient to carry and can be used even in a train while traveling. In offices, people often enjoy playing during the noon recess. It used to be said that friends made through study or calligraphy were good company in the children's world and friends made through *shôgi* or *go* were supposed to be bad company. But these games are now considered intellectual games which cultivate good judgment.

Speaking of *go* or *shôgi*, Mr. Habu's recent activity in the field of *shôgi* is remarkable. He has won seven major titles sponsored by seven newspaper publishers. He is a gentle-mannered, newly-married young man in his twenties. As the result of publicity about his feats, the popularity of *go* and *shôgi* has been increased further. I heard a funny story of a mother who encouraged her son to study *shôgi* instead of attending a cram school, but ordinary people should not simply follow his example because he is extraordinarily bright. He can play *shôgi* in his head. He can defeat computers which are stuffed with all possible facts about *shôgi*. I think this is not unusual, considering that a computer is, after all, a device produced by a human brain. (MIKHIKO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I know the rules of both *go* and *shôgi*. My father was a *go* player of the third rank, so he taught me them when I was young. But I have never played them. I played similar games with simpler rules, such as *hasami shôgi* or *gomoku narabe*. To play these games, only two persons are needed, but we cannot play if we don't have the equipment. We have the equipment in our house, but no one uses it. I think the games are useful to encourage mental growth.

I remember going for a walk with my mother on a summer evening down-

town. Some men, women and children were enjoying themselves, each in their own way, out-of-doors. Some men played *shôgi* right at the front of a house at that time. It was the first time I saw such a sight. My mother said it was *en-dai shôgi* and *go* was called *oyashiki go*. I could not understand the meaning nor the Japanese characters. *Endai* is a bench and *oyashiki* is a Japanese-style room. I think of *endai shôgi* as being popular and warm and *oyashiki go* as being elegant and calm. These words are perhaps no longer used and the images of the games have probably changed.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Nowadays, children's games are quite different from the games we played half a century ago. They are absorbed in playing computer games that their generous parents provide them at home. Some of them go to a game center to find more kinds of computer games to play. Of course, adults also participate in the benefit of computers so they may not restrain their children from playing computer games, but I am sure it is not so good for their health to spend so much time playing such games. And it is regrettable also if traditional Japanese games such as *go* and *shôgi* are no longer as popular as before.

In the 1960s, there was an over-night watch system among male teachers in turn in the public schools in Japan. We female teachers also took our turns on Sundays and other national holidays until 4:30 in the afternoon. Those male teachers enjoyed their night duties twice a week (in a small school) because they cooked their own suppers and breakfasts and played *go* with a janitor after going on their patrolling rounds. In a corner of that six-mat, night-duty room, there was a set of *go*. They must have had fun playing for relaxation. In such a case, *go* is much better than a computer game. Nowadays, night-duty and holiday-

duty systems are no longer in operation. However popular computer games are, people over 60 years of age must be *go* and *shôgi* fans and some youngsters are being influenced by their fathers.

When I was a junior high school girl, I played the board game, *haruma*, a kind of chess. On the board, there was a white hexagon surrounded by six colored triangles, two red, two yellow and two green. All of them were partitioned into many smaller triangles, with spots on each angle to stop the pieces. The three players put ten pieces each on the colored triangles and moved each of the ten pieces of the color they liked, transferring them to the same-colored triangle on the other side, competing in speed. This game was brought by our eldest sister. We enjoyed playing it when our friends visited us.

I also remember that I played the game at family gatherings and the Japanese alphabet card game, *iroha*, with my brother and sisters. Even now and in the future, these games will be appreciated among families, especially during the New Year seasons.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

It is said that these games originated about 400 years ago in India, then entered China and thence to Japan. I am not interested in either *go*, or *igo*, or *shôgi*. I have never played them since I was born, either before or after I was married, nor have members of my family. I think the games of *go* and *shôgi* are not good for the health because they are played while sitting in a room by players looking down at a square board with horizontal and vertical lines. The two players concentrate on how to beat their opponent. It may be good for their brains, but I don't know whether or not the games will continue in the future for a long time.

Older men particularly enjoy playing them, as a way to kill time, more

than older women. It is good that handicapped people can play them.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

I often enjoy reading books written by top *shôgi* or *go* players. I was quite happy to learn that they are not only superior in their special field but acutely perceptive in their views of life as well. Reading their books always gives me ample food for thought. Their books are full of smart aphorisms which come from their constant struggles to win their games. Here are a couple examples of meaningful precepts I have come across in reading a dialogue between Habu Yoshiharu and Yonenaga Kunio in a book.

Asked by Habu about a touchstone to decide whether to grant an applicant admission to his private society, Yonenaga answered that the point is whether or not an applicant's mother respects her husband. Thinking highly of each other is the key to forming a good family, he declared. And a good family provides the basis for fostering desirable character in its members, which has top priority.

As for training in their own arts, both men assert that the present is already the past. They positively declare that being content with things as they are means nothing but the beginning of retrogression. Trying to maintain your present condition which has led to the best you now enjoy is of no use. Only trying to do better can assure you of progress. Otherwise, retrogression awaits you. They asserted this with one voice.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

I am not interested in *go* or *shôgi*. I have had no experience of playing them in my life so far, except for the childish *gunjin* (soldier) *shôgi*, which was temporarily popular in the days of militarism. By nature, I don't like games played while sitting in a room, but I enjoy sports played outdoors in the sunshine. So I don't like to spend time in front of a

computer either, even though as an organizer, I sometimes feel it is inconvenient to inform friends about a reunion.

In the future, computers may keep their popularity, but I'm afraid *go* and *shôgi* will become unpopular just like *jûdô*, a genuine Japanese sport, because they will be overwhelmed by other new forces. (HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

July 23 Message (Subject #311)

*Different English words are used to designate places where people gather to worship or conduct religious ceremonies. In Japan, the terms commonly used to indicate buildings where religious activities are held differ according to the religion. Sacred sites related to Shinto are called "shrines". Buddhists hold ceremonies in "temples". Christians worship in "churches" while Muslims pray in "mosques". Each of these words evoke a different image in our minds. It is interesting that the Chinese character for a Buddhist temple, or *tera*, originally was used for a public office or the imperial court, denoting a place where work was done. I would be interested to read what impression the word *tera* stimulates in your mind. That is the suggested theme for essays this week. Do you ever visit a Buddhist temple? If so, on what occasions? What do you consider to be the function of temples in Japan in the present day? How does it differ from former days? What are your thoughts, memories or evaluations of Japanese o-tera?*

A Buddhist temple, or *tera*, is a very familiar word to many Japanese, but regarding their relationship to the

temple, we see a great change, especially in cities or urban areas.

In former times, every household was supposed to belong to a certain Buddhist sect and to have a family temple, or *bodai-ji*, with which it kept in close contact through such events as funeral or memorial services. In return, the household, called *danka*, gave financial support to the temple. But many city dwellers who left their hometowns to begin a new life in the city do not establish ties with a temple in the city. So, if such people hold a funeral service in the city, they leave all the details to an undertaker and do not care what Buddhist priests take part so long as they belong to the same religious sect as the mourner.

In the country, however, the old custom of keeping a friendly relationship with the family temple is still followed. After the ceremonial service is over, the priest often preaches to the people gathered there, giving a moralizing discourse or speaking on other religious topics.

Industrial modernization has benefited us greatly, but we cannot avoid a confrontation with death or our mortality by any means. As we advance in age and approach senility, we are prone to get depressed. At such a time, I hope Buddhist temples will play a role in comforting people in trouble or be the place for people's souls to be pacified in one way or another.

As for my mother, who is now 83, is concerned, she has been a devotee of the Shingon Sect of Buddhism since she lost her youngest daughter, then aged 10, at sea. The daughter drowned due to the bursting of the inflated floater she was hanging on to. I often heard her chanting a sutra in a singsong manner. From my childhood, a Buddhist temple has been nearby and I took it for granted that the *tera* would always be there, but I was mistaken. Things are not what they used

to be. Some temple buildings have been remodeled and converted from wood to concrete and the successor to the resident priest is now working in a temporary position at a computer firm until he inherits the temple.

We have observed various changes in temples, inwardly and outwardly, but what is important is whether the Japanese are determined to earnestly support Buddhist temples, or *tera*. As long as we exploit temples simply as places to be used for funeral services, it is difficult to think temples have a bright future.

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

When I hear the word *o-tera*, I associate it with funeral services and incense sticks. For me, its only function is performing the final ceremonies of our lives. I have visited many temples to see old architecture and works of art to add to my knowledge.

My husband is a representative of the supporters of our family temple, but since he does not have a faith, I must attend the meetings. We contributed much money to build that temple ten years ago and at a recent meeting the problem of repairing the roof and changing it to sheet copper was raised. Perhaps it requires money again and I must consider what the temple means to us. I presume that most Japanese people have no Buddhist faith even though their religion is Buddhism. This tendency will increase as times change.

I went to Hong Kong in June of this year. I saw many people praying very earnestly there. I felt that they believed in their religion. Anyway, we must pursue the religion which meets our needs. It is important to keep a pure mind and not to become materialistic.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

When I want to talk to my grandmother, I visit the Buddhist temple, *Roh-ji*, where her grave is. She lived with me

until I was fifteen. Then she went to Saga in Kyûshû and spent her last three years there with my aunt's family. I was too young to understand why she had to move. I only thought she was going to be happy if she did so. I remember vividly the day when I went to Tokyo Station with my parents and brother to see her off. It was just before sunset. She smilingly waved her hand from inside the window of a night train.

After several months passed, I suddenly realized how important she was to me. Since then, I wrote a letter to her whenever I thought of her. She always answered my letters promptly. As I had never been to Kyûshû at that time, her letters seemed to be letters from abroad. One day, I noticed her writing was not aligned as straight as before. The characters she wrote got weaker every time I received her letter.

During the spring vacation, just before I entered university, I worked as a part-timer. After working hard at a factory for two weeks, I finally earned enough money to visit her. By that time, she had to stay in bed all day long and had my aunt write letters for her. However, she could recognize me immediately when she saw me. Two days later, I fell sick and found I had a fever of above forty degrees. During the rest of my one-week stay there, I had to lie in bed without exchanging words with her. The morning I left there, all of my aunt's family were surprised when they saw my grandmother stand with a stick by herself in order to see me off. The next time I saw her was at her funeral ceremony, which was held in my aunt's house three months later. I brought her ashes back to Tokyo with my father.

I occasionally want my grandmother to listen to me. She is still alive in my heart. Every time I go to *Roh-ji*, I can feel her love. Visiting there is very special to me.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Yokohama)

First, I wish to investigate the literal meanings of *tera* and "temple" once again. As Dr. Offner explained, the Chinese character for *tera* has a wider meaning (as a public office) than a "Buddhist temple" and the latter, limited meaning of the word was introduced to Japan together with the character by way of Korea. (By the way, our pronunciation of *tera* is said to be derived from the Korean *chol*.)

For a long time, I thought that the English word "temple" was nearly equivalent to our *tera*, which is to say that they corresponded to each other, but the word "temple" itself has a much wider meaning. The Oxford Dictionary indicates that a "temple" is a "building treated as the dwelling-place or devoted to the worship of a god" and gives "the Temple of Jehovah" as an example. An English-Japanese dictionary at hand, on the other hand, translates "temple" as "*seidô* (sanctuary) or *shinden* (shrine) (where a deity other than the Christian God is worshipped)" and gives "the Temple of Apollo at Delphi", "the Temple of Artemis" and "the Temple of Heaven in Peking", in addition to "the Temple of Jehovah" mentioned above, as examples. The dictionary also notes that a Protestant Church in France and a Mormon Church in Salt Lake City, Utah, are also called temples. In light of the above information, I came to realize that there is not such a distinct difference between "temple" and "shrine" (and even "church") and that I should say "Buddhist temple" or Shinto shrine" when I specifically refer to our *jiin* (*tera*) or *jinja*.

Now, I will proceed to the main issue: the present situation of Buddhist temples in Japan. In a previous essay (Subject #262), I mentioned the financial difficulties of temples in our country and noted that the insufficient monetary offerings by supporters of the temples has compelled resident priests to

involve themselves with many kinds of side jobs. Managing a kindergarten is one example. Many people go to the temple on New Year's Day and cast money into an offertory chest, but they seldom go there on ordinary days unless the temple is a place rich in historical associations or a beauty spot. A funeral is the most important event for a temple and a busy time for the resident priest, but they do not happen so often. At the time of a pious Buddhist's death, a posthumous name is given by the priest for a high price. When the family has its own established formalities and a high-level name is given, the price is exorbitant. Some devoted people want to be given a posthumous name during their lifetime, but I do not think this custom will continue long in the future. I myself have no intention to ask our priest to give me such a name.

It is repeatedly said that we Japanese have no religion, or at least, are not enthusiastic in religious activities. I fully realize this fact when I see pious Buddhists or Muslims in front of temples or mosques in Asian countries. Buddhist priests must persevere in their efforts in order to touch young people's hearts in order to bring future prosperity to Buddhism. (MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

Our grandparents on our mother's side were buried in the cemetery of a Buddhist temple called Kaiinji beside the Japan Sea. It is in the village of Kamo in Yamagata Prefecture. The name of the Buddhist temple means "sea mark temple". Our uncle and his wife are buried there also. He had a chance to become a Christian, but he would not make a Christian profession of faith, saying that Buddha's teaching was also good while my mother confessed her Christian faith. Soon after moving to Yokohama to enter a Christian school, she began to go to church and was baptized.

Now our relatives in Kamo are no more. Once a year, my brother and his

wife and our cousin and his family in Kyoto go there to place a bunch of flowers before the grave and talk with a priest in the temple. It is the only Buddhist temple where my relatives sleep. When the sea breezes blow, Kaiinji is not so gloomy as the other temples in the village.

I have another memory of a Buddhist temple. It seems there are many Buddhists in Japan. However, most of them don't go to the temple to worship Buddha. They don't contribute one-tenth of their income to the temple to support the priest, so priests sometimes have to find side jobs, *arbeit*. The resident priest of the Yugyôji Temple in Fujisawa City in Kanagawa Prefecture opened a cheap lodging house on the temple grounds about 40 years ago to raise funds. He hired a cook to prepare meals for the people who stayed overnight there.

Mrs. Ina Takadama Saito, whom we call Takadama San, served there, cooking, cleaning the temple inside and out and preparing the bath. She had ministered at Wakamatsu Sakaemachi Church as a lady evangelist thirty years earlier. Her husband died soon after her son was born. She experienced many difficulties after that. She suffered from a fire, was robbed of her fortune and subsequently contracted a skin disease. She felt like she was Job. After her recovery, she was employed as a cook at Yugyôji in order to send her son to Kanto Gakuin University. She worked hard to serve the lodgers.

I once had an opportunity to visit her and her son, spending three days there. The temple was in the city suburbs. I walked up the long stairway at the spacious temple site. Yugyôji means "leisure temple", but Mrs. Ina Takadama Saito used to get up very early every morning, prepare breakfast for more than ten people and then strike wooden clappers saying, "Hey, *bôzu sama*, get up right away!" The sole resident priest

then chanted Buddhist sutras before the altar while everyone else washed their faces and brushed their teeth before breakfast. After saying good-bye to the lodgers and sending her son to school, she continued to work. In the evening, new lodgers came. She served the priest and many lodgers supper and prepared their baths and beds. At 7 o'clock on Sunday evenings, she was free and went to Fujisawa Church to attend the evening service, taking her Bible and hymn book. "My job and religious faith are separate", she said.

In this way, I found out that some Buddhist temples in Japan operate inns as side businesses. I think many more temples operate sightseeing businesses, but they should not sell paper charms or amulet cases.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

It is our custom to visit a Buddhist temple at least twice a year, even though we are Christians. The remains of our ancestors are buried in the graveyard of that temple and we also will be buried there in the future. In ancient times, corpses were interred in the ground, but now they are cremated.

The ancestors of my husband were Buddhists, but his father, who had belonged to the Shingon Sect of Buddhism, became a Christian. We must offer some money (*ofuse*) to the Buddhist temple at least twice a year—at *obon*, in the middle of the year, and at *kure*, the end of the year. We visit the graves on the anniversary days, bringing some branches of *sakaki*, a kind of evergreen, and seasonal flowers for each grave. We sprinkle water over the gravestones and pray in front of them.

In former times, the temple priest, the owner of the land, swept around each grave, but recently, he does not do so (here in Tsuyama). Recently, Buddhist priests are apt to get much income from profit-making enterprises, such as man-

aging of kindergartens, parking areas, and so on. I feel that Buddhist temples are losing their religious aspect, little by little, in Tsuyama.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

We live next-door to a temple. In 1965, we got a house on leased land owned by the temple. Our lot used to be a part of the temple ground and the front yard faces a lane leading to the temple gate. Many cherry trees were planted on both sides of the lane. They used to be much smaller but now have grown very big. In spring, they put forth beautiful blossoms, which we enjoy very much. In summer, they provide us with cool shadows and clean air with their profuse green leaves. In fall, they keep us very busy. We have to tackle the job of sweeping up their fallen leaves everyday. In winter, we just enjoy their silhouettes against the clear blue sky. Though many trees have been cut down, they still form a small wooded area. We are thankful to be allowed to live here and try to have a good relationship with the priest and his family. Fortunately, they are very kind to us.

The temple is a branch temple belonging to the Tendai Sect. It is not big but was founded about 400 years ago and the site of a famous folk song—Gombe (a peasant) sows seed and a crow comes to pick them up—is in the precincts. The song comically mocks the futile work of a peasant.

The priest, his wife and their son lead a very busy life. They have to conduct funerals, memorial services and assemblies for the parishioners. The Tendai Sect has a hierarchical structure, at the top of which is Hiei-zan. As a priest of a branch temple, he has to participate in various kinds of rituals held at higher temples of the sect. Certainly, the temple plays a background role in the life of the community. Though the temple was rebuilt, it is the oldest, historic site in

the community and famous, at least in Meguro. Some people visit there on a hiking course to satisfy their curiosity or to enjoy the atmosphere but not to worship or seek solace there. I do not know that the priest gives sermons to the people in general as pastors do in Christian churches.

Though quite ignorant of Buddhism, I suppose that we Japanese try to be faithful to family-related temples because of our tradition of ancestor worship. We think that we owe our existence to our ancestors, so giving thanks to them and praying for their peaceful repose after death are our obligations. Most Japanese families have Buddhist altars in which ancestral tablets are placed. Under the Tokugawa regime, all persons were required to be registered as parishioners of some Buddhist temple and we still belong to the temples of various sects. We donate much money to have funerals or memorial services conducted. While the ritual is being conducted, we have to remain seated for a long time without understanding the meaning of the sutra at all. I am afraid we Japanese are so secular that we try to make use of such occasions just as reunions of relatives or acquaintances.

I was much impressed to know that an old lady who attended a Christian funeral for the first time was amazed at the passage quoted from First Corinthians, chapter 13. She said she had never heard such a wonderful message and wrote it down to memorize. "What good words are in the Bible", she remarked. Certainly, Buddhism seems not to be competent to serve as a guiding principle for us Japanese, but Christianity, which forbids the ancestor worship which Japanese have been accustomed to for so long, does not seem to be easily accepted. Though it is said that Confucian ethical values still survive in Japanese life, I am afraid that Japanese will

become more and more materialistic and atheistic and degenerate sooner or later.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

I was deeply impressed with a hypothesis regarding the invisible power of Buddhist temples put forward by the late great writer, Shiba Ryōtarō. I will try to summarize what he wrote.

In the 1870's, the Meiji government issued a decree to abolish Buddhism, including its temples and scriptures, in favor of Shintoism and sought to enforce it. Some prefectures faithfully followed the decree and destroyed their temples while others did not do so. As a result, more temples remained in some prefectures than in others.

Furthermore, it is interesting to find that students' average intelligence in general differs from prefecture to prefecture and that those prefectures with more intelligent students also have students who are generally well-mannered, which is to say they behave with suitable decorum on the whole.

It is surprising to find that the more Buddhist temples a prefecture has, the higher level of students' intelligence it enjoys. The writer attributes the difference to the invisible educational power of Buddhist temples. In former times, Buddhist temples functioned as a center of education as well as of religion in a locality. The priests went to and from a metropolis, bringing back a high level of learning together with decorum or propriety and young people were very eager to gain new knowledge. As a result, the average level of intelligence among the general public of the locality rose on the whole. These facts lead to the conclusion that the density of Buddhist temples in a prefecture account for a higher level of students' intelligence as well as their propriety. This is the invisible educational power of Buddhist temples.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

O-tera (a Buddhist temple) reminds me of a children's song, *Yûyake koyake*, meaning "sunset glow". The lyrics describe an idyllic evening scene in a rural area. A temple is standing on the hillside against the blazing sky after the sunset and its bell is ringing. Children go home, hand in hand, and a flock of crows fly back to their nests.

When I was a small child, most Japanese were farmers living in villages. Village life was closely connected with the Buddhist temple. In the village in Tochigi Prefecture where I grew up, the temple was located on the sunny side of a hill. From there, one could see the whole village beneath one's feet. Behind the temple building was a spacious cemetery where the ancestors of the villagers were buried. Villagers went there on many occasions: on vernal and autumnal equinoxes, *o-bon* and memorial days of their family members' deaths. Prior to those days, they weeded and cleaned up the plots belonging to their family and prepared foods to offer.

Old people gathered in the temple to listen to lectures the priest made and to recite sutras together. Elderly people often had meetings and discussed things concerning farming plans, educational problems, village events and so on. Children played *kimo-dameshi* on summer evenings. It was a scary experience for children to go in the darkness between graves. The temple was also a place for children to learn morals and ethics. There was a huge picture depicting the world after death. *Emma-daiô* (the king of hell), a river of blood and a needle mountain were illustrated in colors. Children were told that they would be sent there if they were bad. This picture made a great impact on them and helped to prevent them from doing evil deeds.

My family lived in a rustic area for five years before we moved to a big city. *O-tera* is a nostalgic place for me. It is related to many events I had with my

family, relatives and neighborhood friends. In particular, I still like the heavy gong of the bell issuing from the temple. It lures me to serenity and contemplation.

I would like to add one more thing to this essay on *o-tera*. *O-tera* makes me recall the prayer recited by monks before meals in Zen temples. I did not practice it in a temple but in my home by myself, reading a book written by Dogen, the founder of Eihei-ji Temple. In order to conquer my chronic disease, I decided to become a vegetarian, but the process was not an easy one. I recited the prayer prior to each meal and contemplated its content. It indicated that one should think where this food came from. One should think of sun, rain, wind, insects, farmers, distributors, cooks and so on—all beings and natural phenomena that worked on and contributed to it. One should not eat the food to please one's mouth but to lessen one's hunger and maintain one's bodily health. One should keep from becoming greedy. This food is given to one only for the purpose of generating righteous deeds.

I cannot practice perfectly what is taught in this prayer. However, I must confess that I could never have overcome difficulties I had in the process of becoming a strict vegetarian if I had not followed this discipline.

(NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

The word *tera* evokes in my mind a small, middle-aged woman. It was at a certain little temple that I met her for the first time and I've had several opportunities to see her at the same place since then. But we haven't talked with each other so much because every time we visit the temple to give our little aid in the Buddhist ceremonies, we are busy brewing tea as in the tea ceremony, serving dinner to many priests and guests and washing many cups and soup bowls. She never talks about herself, but gradually

I've gotten to know about her deep relationship to the temple. When she was a young mother, she suffered from troubles so painful that she despaired. If the temple had not given its support to her, she could not have continued her life with her children. Almost 30 years have passed since that time and her life cannot have been an easy one. But now she has a very calm smile on her face all the time and that makes a deep impression on me.

I was led to the temple by my mother's death. The nun of the temple and her son, a young priest, happened to be in the car behind the truck which drove away after it hit and killed my mother who was walking on the crosswalk when the traffic light was green. The nun and her son did everything they could for her, including reciting the *Makura-gyô* Sutra on the spot. What a great relief that has brought to my heart! And strange to say, the nun's name is the same as my mother's *kaimyô* (Buddhist name given after death). When my mother's accident occurred, I was in the middle of the biggest trouble that I had ever experienced in my life, so her death increased my anguish even more.

The word *tera* doesn't mean simply a building to me. It's something that consoles our wounded mind when we pray with a sincere heart, that encourages us to live with a peaceful mind although the troubles still exist and that urges us to help or comfort other people in difficulties. In that sense, there's not any difference at all among *tera*, church and mosque to me.

We cannot live choosing only fortunate things in our lives. Unfortunate things, sad incidents, many kinds of misfortune can rush to us when we are enjoying our peace. But if we have built *tera*, church or mosque in our minds firmly, we never reject those misfortunes, or rather we try to be ready to accept them as part of our lives.

I don't like to confine such words as *tera*, church and mosque to the special sphere of religion. Because the word "religion" sometimes implies a mistaken concept. If we just feel pure gratitude to some existence that gives us precious lives and that lets us live with a calm, thankful heart, we should come to think that engaging in struggles to perpetuate a certain kind or sect of religion is quite far from the true heart of religion itself. (KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

I regularly walk for an hour everyday to keep in good health. On my walk, I pass a Buddhist temple named Kasadera Kannon. I usually drop by the temple to pray, otherwise I would feel uneasy as if I forgot to do something important.

Generally speaking, *tera* reminds me of *Yûyake koyake*, a typical Japanese children's song and a haiku poem: *Kaki kueba kane ga naru nari Horyûji* ("When I ate a persimmon, the bell in Horyûji just rang"), which was composed by Shiki Masaoka. It engenders some positive emotions such as nostalgia for my young days, gratitude to my ancestors, tranquillity to my mind, etc.

In that sense, I prefer wooden temples to the new ones built of reinforced concrete.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

July 30 Message (Subject #312)

A recent news article noted results of research related to the relationship of bodily hair and intelligence. Male university students in the U. S. had more bodily hair than the male population in general; medical and engineering students in south India had more bodily hair than manual laborers and, in regard to academic ranking among students, "the

hairier males got better grades". This upset the common idea that men with hairy chests were more brawny than brainy. Orientals tend to have straight, black hair, Africans kinky black hair, while Caucasians may have naturally wavy hair of different colors. We now see many kinds of hair styles, including long hair on men, short hair on women and shaved heads of priests and nuns. Not only older people dye their hair to make them appear younger. Young women and men also dye their hair various colors.. "Hair" is the subject for essays this week. What do you think of modern hair styles and colors, of permanent waves, of the special coiffures of Japanese brides, geisha or sumo wrestlers, of the custom of dyeing grey or white hair?

Before the war, most Japanese women were proud of their black, long, straight hair. After the Second World War ended, many women got permanent waves at beauty parlors at least once a month. It took a long time—five or six hours—to have their hair set in a beautiful style. Gradually, the time required was shortened and recently most Japanese women get permanents. On the other hand, many men also get permanents. That is a fashion nowadays.

In ancient or modern times, some old women liked to dye their hair black. It looks queer. However, if they are happy with it, it is allowable. We must take good care of our hair because God has given each one of us our hair from the time we were born. God gives us a white crown when our hair turns white.

The special coiffures of Japanese brides, (*bunkin-taka-shimada*), *momoware* for geisha and *chonmage* for sumo wrestlers are customary hair styles related to their work or special occasions. Recently I hear that some women dye their hair to go with the dress they wear.

It is quite unbelievable to me. Anyway, we must take good care of our valuable hair.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

It requires courage for a bald man to write about hair. It is something like a poor man writing about wealth or a dishonest man writing about morality. I was in the latter half of my twenties when I started getting bald. I told my wife before our marriage that I would get a small salary because I was a government employee and that I would become bald prematurely, taking after my father. The reason I informed her was because I did not want to be called a deceiver afterwards.

In former days, the hair style of a man or woman was determined by the social group to which he or she belonged. In the case of men, samurai wore their hair in a knot and merchants had their own hair style. In the case of women, a married woman did up her hair in a *chignon* and a girl followed the *momoware* style of coiffure. As is commonly known, sumo wrestlers and geisha have their peculiar hair styles even today. I hear that Akebono has difficulty making his curly hair into a topknot.

When I was a middle-school boy, we had close-cropped hair, which was called *bôzu-atama*. Of course, this expression comes from the resemblance to a Buddhist priest's head. (Strictly speaking, they are not the same for a priest's head is shaven bald.) It was in wartime then and we were not reluctant to obey such regulations. Even today, quite a number of junior or senior high schools adopt regulations that require boy students to have close-cropped hair and it often causes controversy.

At schools where long hair is accepted, there is another problem: students want to dye their hair, disregarding school regulations. Dyeing their hair (usually brown, called *cha-patsu*) and

wearing pierced earrings are widely favored by young men today. They say that it is their way of self-expression. I hate that fashion. According to an old Chinese saying: "We are gifted with our body, including hair and skin, by our parents. Not to injure the body is the beginning of filial piety." We have adhered strictly to this precept. Nothing can be more absurd than to dye one's natural black hair and to pierce one's ears, shedding blood.

Respect for natural appearance should also apply to bald heads. Some bald-headed people let their hair grow long on one side and extend that hair over the bald part. I have had the experience of taking a bath with such a person. I could not bear to look at his head before he made himself up for it reminded me of a gibbeted head at Suzugamori (a famous place of execution in the Edo era). I do not have the nerve to make such a pitiful appearance. I can tolerate grey-haired people dyeing their hair black. This may be prudent for them and I do not have a disagreeable feeling looking at it. It cannot be compared to the camouflage of a bald head noted above. We should not feel ashamed of our bald heads. Samurai of old days used to shave their head when they apologized to a person as a proof of their sincerity. Thus considered, I think, the appearance of a bald head should be much more esteemed.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

By chance, I read an article in the *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper on July 27th about hair. The headline asks why people want to dye their hair brown and two women wrote about hair. Recently, brown hair is called *cha-patsu*, although I have not heard this new word used. The appreciation of black hair is decreasing and people dye their hair whatever color they like. They assert themselves by dyeing their hair. Perhaps it is the same with hair style.

I feel that the expression *cha-patsu* implies a strong will, including some sensitivity. Some people long for brown hair because it gives them an exotic feeling. They want to change their black hair. Some one said that brown hair is related to getting dressed up. It goes with many colors of their clothes. It is certain that I do not want to change my black hair, which is becoming silvery, year by year.

In all cases, if people choose with their own wills and are satisfied, it is good to make things bright around us—not only related to hair but to our hearts also. . (MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Japanese women in the old days were proud of their hair and tried to keep it black and straight. Well-groomed hair was as black as a wet crow. As for Japanese men at that time, they had their hair cut short. Most of them do so now also, but some other young men have their hair dyed brown, yellow or green. We see many colors on their long hair. Some Japanese girls have their hair dyed brown also. Of course, Western ladies with brown or golden hair are very attractive, but we Japanese were given black hair by God. Black hair is good, too. We had better keep our hair its natural color until it turns gray or white, like pepper and salt, although artificially waved hair is permitted. Snow-white hair is also a gift from God and aged people may be proud of it, but it is not good to artificially color hair white before one reaches that age. The special coiffures of Japanese brides and geisha are wigs which are worn when they are needed, case by case. If their own hair was used, it would be very difficult for them to arrange it daily.

The hair style of sumo wrestlers is very suitable for them, both in the old days and today, because sumo wrestling itself has been a Japanese traditional sport. If they wrestled with short-cut

hair, wearing pants, it would be funny, and less attractive to watch. All their styles, from head to foot, are very good as long as they are sumo wrestlers. Buddhist priests and nuns live in temples which may be in keeping with their shaven heads. They themselves may want to keep it so, but I think nuns had better change their hair style into an ordinary woman's style because they are women.

As for hair styles, it is desirable that a man be manly, a woman womanly. Japanese should be Japanese-like in this modern day and Western people should maintain their natural styles also.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

We Japanese use the expression *kuroyama no yô na hitodakari*, which literally means "a crowd like a black mountain", to denote a large crowd of people. I didn't pay any special attention to this phrase until I went to the United States because it is quite natural for us to see black hair in Japan.

One day in 1985, I went to the Ohio State Fair and saw hordes of visitors there. They had hair of many kinds of colors, not to mention their skin colors. A crowd in the U. S. didn't look like a black mountain. Of course, I had known that in my mind, but when I saw and felt it as a reality, it was a sort of culture shock. I learned it is very important to accept differences in appearances of individuals as well as differences in their thoughts.

The recent phenomenon of many young people dyeing their hair seems a good opportunity for us to get used to differences. Unfortunately, school regulations usually don't allow students to dye their hair. Dyeing hair is a sign of juvenile delinquency here.

We need to put forth a special effort to do something different from others. However, as long as it is not related to crimes, we should do what we think good. Creativity, which we do not learn

in school might be encouraged under such circumstances and we might learn to accept and respect people who are different (TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Yokohama)

The other day I attended a funeral ceremony. There was a big photo of the deceased hung on the wall. Glancing at the photo, I thought it was a different person because his hair was snow-white whereas it was dark black during his life time. However, there was no other difference and I realized that he had dyed his hair for several years before his death. When he passed away, I wondered why he died despite his youngish appearance, but when I saw the photo, it became clear that he was really an aged man.

Recently, I often come across young ladies with hair dyed brown. If the color change is minor, it would be acceptable to me. It may be rather cute or charming. However, if the dyeing is excessive, it is detestable. I dislike seeing young people with their hair dyed dark yellow or even dark purple.

Speaking about the quality of hair, a person with thin hair can hide it by wearing a wig. However, when he takes it off, people will be surprised to see how thin his own hair is. Whether it is color or quantity, I believe the best thing is what is natural, not artificial.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

My grandmother had curly brown hair and was ashamed of it because such hair did not fit the traditional Japanese coiffure nor the general fancy for women's hair. She seldom put up her hair in a traditional way, but she was good at fixing the hair of others and sometimes fixed my mother's hair. My mother's hair was straight, pitch-black and thick, just ideal for the old Japanese hair style. My mother had a *marumage* (a coiffure for a married woman) on New Year's Day. My father was happy to see it but he did not

pay her any compliment. My father was almost bald at the age of forty.

Fortunately, I did not inherit my hair from my father. My hair was coarse and thick, if not pitch-black. I had long hair when I was a high school student. I got a *momoware* (a coiffure for an unmarried young woman) made of my own hair. I was excited and proud of it. My big brother who usually was indifferent to me, took pictures of me, walked me down-town and introduced me to his friends. I felt as if I were an adult because I was treated like a lady. One thing I forgot about this coiffure was how to sleep. I put a support on the *kotatsu* table and rested my head on it. I spent two nights in this posture and on the third morning, I dismantled my pompous coiffure.

At that time, I usually wore my hair in two braids. Soon after I had the *momoware*, I suddenly wanted to change my hair style and had my hair cut very short. My grandmother was shocked to see my head and lamented, "Didn't you know that hair was a woman's life?" I had heard this saying somewhere before, but I didn't agree.

My sister had more beautiful hair than my mother and was called *ke-bijin* (literally meaning "hair beauty"). She had long hair and wore it up. She was about to have a haircut on the day before she went to the hospital to give birth to her first child, but her husband did not want her to have her hair cut. This reminded me of a German woman I met in a hospital in Munich. She worked there doing small chores for hospitalized patients. She was a gay young woman and had fabulous blond hair, worn up in a glamorous style. Everybody complimented her and she then proudly told them that her husband loved her long hair and helped her every time she washed it. Men both in the west and east seemed to like long hair some thirty years ago.

Time has passed and the life style

has changed greatly in Japan. People don't wear kimonos anymore and black straight hair is too heavy on western clothes. They have diverse taste for hair styles, including length and color. Some men have long hair and some women very short hair. I don't think that men still have a common fancy for women's long hair. Hair dye and hair manicure are very popular among young and old. If she had lived now, my grandmother would not have needed to be ashamed of her hair. On the contrary, she would have been fairly trendy. (NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

Recently, I have often seen young people with their hair dyed an unnatural blond. I have found this phenomenon so strange and difficult to explain that I am at a loss regarding what to say about it. I wonder what makes them do such a queer thing.

I would like to try to place myself in the shoes of the young people. Boys in their high teens are beginning to have a troubled heart concerning a variety of problems of life. The search for their self-identity is given priority. Some earnestly wish for being another, somehow better, person than they really are. This can become the springboard for a new course of life they may take. Then a variety of options appear before them. Changing their hair color is an easy option. It may give them the illusion that they were already another being. But people who see their blond hair often frown at them or give them an icy look. The color itself is very much to their disadvantage if they are to keep company with others. They dare to dye their hair blond despite the apparent disadvantage. Probably because they want to camouflage themselves by doing so. They dare to ignore people's icy stares. Some of them go so far as to give those people the elbow. This is why most people tend to keep them at a respectable distance.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

August 6 Message (Subject #313)

Olympus is the name of a mountain in Greece. In Greek mythology it was the home of the Greek gods, where Zeus, the chief god, held his court. Far away from this mountain, in a temple of Olympia, a famous statue of Zeus, one of the seven wonders of the world, was enshrined. In 776 B. C., racing contests were held near this temple and every four years for over a thousand years afterward. Discontinued in 392 A. D., after the 293rd Olympiad because of their becoming professionalized, the (modern) Olympics were revived as international sporting events in 1896. Now, 100 years later, the 26th Summer Olympics were recently held in the U.S. city of Atlanta. What are your impressions of these games which were broadcast daily in Japan? Do you think the atmosphere of the Olympics has changed since they were held in Tokyo 32 years ago? Do you think the Games accomplish their intended purpose? Do you have any suggestions about how to improve them? Were you happy with the results?

I remember a trip to Greece where the Olympics began. I went to Olympia on the Peloponnesus Peninsula and Delphi in the middle of Greece. I saw a sports ground at both places. There was another ground for tank battles at Olympia.

This summer of 1996, many games or racing contests are being held in Atlanta in the U. S. A. I presume all those who participate in the contests may want to get a medal, whether gold, silver or bronze. That is natural, but others in Japan, who are not involved in the Olympics, are critical of them. There is

much news in newspapers, on television and radio.

What is most important about the Olympics? It is the effort to become a representative athlete and to share the Olympic spirit. Not only the medals but the sweat of the athletes is a valuable treasure. I do not like to worry about the results. I want to praise all the representative athletes of the world.

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

The centennial Olympic games in Atlanta, commemorating the modern Olympics revived in 1896, came to an end in peace. Though an act of terrorism took place in a nearby park, it was not so serious as to interfere with the games themselves for which we should rejoice, thinking of their development in the coming second century. The opening and closing ceremonies were splendid and I hear that the management of the games left almost nothing to be desired, but I feel that the number of events in the Olympics has become too large. I cannot even understand the rules of some events. This is a problem to be solved in the future together with the commercialization of the Olympics which was characteristic of the meet this time.

The results of Japanese athletes were disappointing; they suffered crushing defeats, except in some judo events. I can accept the fact that the U. S. A., Russia or China greatly surpassed us, but it is a matter of regret that we dropped behind France, Italy and even Korea. (That Great Britain joined us in a poor showing is a slight consolation.) Mr. Taniguchi, a marathon runner, expressed this thought after his defeat: "Athletes of other countries seriously analyzed us. I feel the change of the times." I think all the points at issue in the various events are reflected in his saying. All Japanese athletes and staff members should realize this fact. If not, people

will not be convinced of the reason for dispatching them in such great numbers.

Among many Japanese athletes, the attitude of some women were impressive. Ms. Arimori's strenuous effort and her smile at the goal were memorable. She said with tearful eyes: "I wish to praise myself now." Many people were moved by this comment as they knew her persistent endeavor for four years after the last Olympics. Ms. Tamura's smile was also charming. She gained a silver medal in the last Olympics and had been aiming at a gold medal this time. But again she could not attain her goal, being obstructed by a North Korean newcomer. She did not weep sad tears, however, but pledged her word smiling that she would succeed next time. Speaking of weeping, I wonder why many players (including men) shed tears in their mortification. I can understand tears of joy, but I think it is disgraceful to weep when one is defeated. Sportsmen should be more like samurai in their attitude.

A North Korean (woman) gold medalist in judo said: "I came here to bring joy to our ruler, General Kim." An Afghan marathon runner, who reached the goal last, said: "I am a representative of our nation, so I could not drop out along the way." The words of these two athletes reflect the education they had received. Japanese athletes in former days must have held the same convictions, which they have now lost. For those countries, the Olympics are a means of enhancing national glory. I am rather pleased that our young athletes do not express such patriotic sentiments but participate in the Olympics without being so concerned about the outcome.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I enjoyed viewing the magnificent skills of the Olympic athletes on television. I also read newspapers and weekly magazines which carried many articles and pictures regarding the medalists and

their opponents. Their bodies were real gifts from Heaven. Their straining to win medals seemed beyond my imagination.

A Japanese female swimmer, Suzu Chiba, has been bashed by the press after she said she had enjoyed swimming in the Games. Some sportswriters wanted to hear about her eagerness to win a medal or her apologies for her failure to get one. I cannot understand why she is frequently criticized. I think she never deceived anyone by saying she wanted to get a medal. The media should be blamed for its narrow-minded imagination or expectation.

It is not only Suzu. Many athletes could not get medals. Let's look at the number of Japanese athletes who went to Atlanta. There were almost five hundred. Next, let's count the number of medals they won. There were less than twenty. In some events, Japan's new records were far from the world records. Still they went there to take part in the Olympics. It was once said that there was meaning in participation itself.

I want the media to stop personal attacks for Japan's miserable results and praise the athletes for what they have done. Anyway, they did their best. I don't care which country got the most medals. I really enjoyed viewing the Olympic athletes' performances wherever they came from.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Yokohama)

First of all, I am happy to know that it is the 100th anniversary since the modern Olympics were revived as international sports events. It is very helpful to know that the years when the Olympics are held are those years whose numbers can be exactly divided by four.

Speaking of the Olympics, I remember the Olympics which were held in Tokyo in 1964, 32 years ago. At that time, I was in Sôma, on ocean coast in Fukushima Prefecture. It was the third year after I became a teacher in the pub-

lic school. A Tokyo Olympic Chorus was a popular song from April of that year. There were some students who had no television set at home. Hideko, my roommate and I, did not have one either. So all of us watched the Games on a black-and-white television set at the school while the rich teachers and students having rich parents went home and watched on their own television sets. I remember especially the performance of the Japanese women's volleyball athletes who brought victory to Japan. That stimulated the physical education teacher much more than the students at our school. He used to pose as Mr. Daimatsu, the manager, when he coached the volleyball club members.

This year, I watched the Olympic Games on my own color television set. Japanese people, including me, became richer than in 1964. I enjoyed watching all the athletes in the world do their best as representatives of their countries. I think the Games brought them satisfaction. I, myself, am not good at sports. In some events, I could not understand who was the winner unless I heard the explanation. It cannot be helped that if one person wins, another must lose. I hoped and expected that Ryôko Tamura, the Japanese athlete in the 48-kilogram judo division would win a gold medal this year. She had trained for four years to be the strongest, but she could not get a gold medal. How charming she was to keep her smiling face all the time! I am sure she will challenge the tall judo wrestlers of other countries after four years. I hope that all the athletes in the next Olympics in 2000 enjoy their games, aiming at being faster, higher and stronger than before. The medals are to be given rather than to be gotten.

Anyway, I say "Thank you very much for your good job" to every athlete, every supporting organization and every news reporter. And I heartily hope the

terrorist who set a bomb in the park near the place of this year's Olympics will reflect upon what he did and never do it again at any place.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

I enjoyed looking at the many kinds of games except for judo, wrestling and other boring matches which were broadcast daily on television in Japan. I felt that the atmosphere of the Olympic Games has changed since they were held in Tokyo thirty years ago. The champions were rather self-advertising. Some athletes were forbidden to participate because they had taken forbidden drugs.

I do not know the true meaning of the Olympic flame or torch, but I suggest that the host nation not give words of praise only to the winners but words of encouragement to the losers as well. I also suggest that more importance should be attached to physical training, rather than winning or losing. Also, it is not good to spend so much national funds for the Olympics. It is much better for give the money to the underdeveloped nations of the world.

(TAMAKO MORIMOTO, Tsuyama)

Looking back after the Games were over, Japan's record was very bad. I think it is due to a lack of an "indomitable spirit". I was very surprised at the unexpectedly few medals. Of course, the champions of America, Russia and China were far beyond Japan, but Japan was lower than France, Italy, Germany and Korea. Such a result is not only related to sports, but to politics and the economy as well. I'm worried about Japan's future. The Olympics every four years should be a kind of barometer of each country's power.

The Atlanta Olympics impressed on me that world champions get their power both from physical strength and spiritual exercise. A runner who drew her inspiration from Ethiopian's legendary

marathon champion, Abebe Bikila, ran away from the field on July 28th to win the women's marathon. Fatuma Roba took control of the 42.195 kilometer race from about the 19-kilometer mark and never looked back, winning the gold medal with a time of 2 hours, 26 minutes, 5 seconds. I understood from the TV news that she used to run back and forth to school for many kilometers every day from her home on a high hill to the school in the lowland. I thought that was great exercise.

Japan's Yôko Arimori crossed the finish line in third place to win the bronze medal behind Roba and defending Olympic champion Valentine Yagorova of Russia. "I'm very pleased to have returned to the Olympic Marathon and win a medal again", she said. I admire her for her strong spiritual power with which she overcame many troubles, a difficult surgical operation and rehabilitation exercises. Also, she always gave us a smile. She is a proven champion. Ryôko Tanaka lost in the final bout of the 48-kilogram judo division. It was a bitter disappointment for the 20-year-old Tamura. What should have been victory number 85 instead turned into a narrow loss to Kye Sun of North Korea.

The affluent Japanese society must return to the beginning and reconsider.

(MIEKO OKUMURA, Mizho, Nagoya)

I was at the Portland Airport at the end of July and met a large group of Japanese there. They were tourists who had visited the Atlanta Olympics and were on their way back to Japan. I was surprised at the number of people in the group. There were about sixty. When the Olympics began, I was in Oregon. The Atlanta Olympics was not the biggest event there.

I stayed one-and-a-half weeks in a small city on the outskirts of Portland. It was a dream come true that I got the opportunity to hear English all day long.

I began to understand people talking on the street or in the supermarket just a day or two before my return to Japan. Just when my ears began to get accustomed to their language, I had to leave America.

I firmly decided to listen to English programs on television as much as possible, but when I arrived home, I was shocked. There were no programs via satellite. Instead, Olympic games were broadcast from early morning until late at night. There were no English news reports, no English dramas, no documentaries or movies in the original languages. I was disappointed and became upset. My plan to listen to English programs came crashing down.

I wondered if that was how it was at the last Olympic four years ago. Were all the regular satellite programs canceled then? Was the schedule of NHK BS-1 entirely packed with Olympic Games?

On the front page of every newspaper were articles related to the Olympic Games with colored pictures every morning and evening. All the television channels covered the games all day long. Exceptionally great coverage was given to these Games and to the medal winners in particular. People in the mass media are keen on medals and winners. They are almost in a frenzy. An overheated Olympic mood permeated Japan.

I am not against having the Olympic Games broadcast live and in detail. However, I regarded the media coverage to be exaggerated. NHK was especially remiss. For the Olympic Games, all programs coming from abroad were sacrificed. That was thoughtless, ethnocentric and unfair. No thought was given to residents from overseas who don't understand Japanese and rely on news in English or other foreign languages. Those people also pay money to NHK for getting information of events in other parts of the world. During the Olympics, they

were totally ignored. They were like the deaf or the blind.

The Olympics is over now. I feel relieved and glad to see that things are back to normal. (NAOMI KONDO, Handa)

The Olympic Games held in Atlanta and broadcast on television interfered with my daily schedule, but they included a variety of interesting topics to think about. Here are only some of them.

1) Medal Fanatics: Japanese Olympic President Furuhashi reportedly bemoaned the Japanese athletes' inability to meet pre-Olympic predictions of at least five gold medals and at least 24 medals in all. In fact, Japan won a total of 14 medals, eight fewer than it did four years ago. "*Ganbare Nippon!*" was the common cry of people encouraging athletes to win medals. But the shouts proved fruitless. Needless to say, medals are given to individual winners, not to countries. However, the hoisting of national flags to the music of national anthems in honor of each gold medalist at the award ceremony after each event stimulates a nationalistic feeling in the hearts not only of the champions but of the television viewers as well. Majestic flags and solemn music have a exhilarating effect on the atmosphere of the ceremony.

2) Nationalism: From the first, the prediction of possible medalists from among Japanese athletes was, after all, in the area of wishful thinking. The predictions only based on their past objective data were somehow enhanced with the flavor of nationalism. And nationalism is often tinged with jingoism. The frog in the well does not know the ocean. Competition among individual athletes is sometimes indiscernibly changed into national competition. In this connection, I would like to suggest that, in the future, each individual represent only his/her municipality instead of a country.

3) Beautiful Performances: Some of the medalists greatly impressed me. Black men and women were especially splendid, irrespective of their nationality. Small wonder they have vaulted into history.

4) Whose Success? Some say it was the Coca-Cola Company's, but it was a contribution to world peace.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

I watched the Olympic Games held in the city of Atlanta on television. All events attracted me as participants were the world's first-ranking athletes and they all seemed to do their best.

On the other hand, there were some scenes that disappointed me. Winners, without exception, showed an excessive feeling of pride. I would not deny the natural emotion of delight when they win over their opponents, but I think the real meaning of participating in the games is not related only to victory and defeat. More important is a friendly atmosphere for the contest. It seemed that victory was the only aim of the athletes. As a result, each athlete seemed to be absorbed with how many medals he/she could get.

I'm afraid the attraction of the Olympic Games will be reduced as time goes on.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

This 54th issue of "*Daily Word Echoes*" is a little larger than average. It contains 60 essays contributed by 17 writers. Five writers (including the two from the most distant prefectures of Fukushima and Okayama) wrote an essay on all 6 themes. The surnames of three of those writers end in "moto". Three writers contributed essays on 5 themes. One wrote 3 essays. The surnames of 3 of the 4 who wrote 2 essays end in "mura". Finally, 5 writers contributed essays on one theme. All of the writers did a good job. (C.O.)

Essay on Subject#309 received late

At present, cellular phones seem to be popular among young people, tradesmen and, particularly, craftsmen or people involved in the construction business.

It is true that cellular phones can be convenient to their users. On the other hand, they can also cause various problems. For example, not a few traffic accidents related to cellular phones have been reported recently. It is easy to imagine how dangerous it is to be absorbed in a conversation on the phone while driving. Such drivers who are inattentive to traffic conditions cause rear-end collisions or bump into other cars at cross-roads. What most worries me is that when the driver answers the phone, he/she must drive with one hand, which is very dangerous. One should avoid this by parking the car at the edge of the road if one wants to talk. Otherwise, one should not answer the phone.

Another point I wish to make is that when cellular phones are used near a person who has a pacemaker (a device to regulate the heartbeat) embedded, they have serious ill effects on that person. Such being the case, I'd like to caution those who use them to abide by the rules in the use of them.

Generally speaking, it takes time before new things get widely accepted by the people, so the same thing can be said about cellular phones. I myself belong to the group of people who are far from jumping at new things, so I don't think I will hold the receiver of a cellular phone in my hand for the time being.

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

Over the 14 years since the first issue of "*Daily Word*" *Echoes* was published, a total of 2792 essays submitted by 192 writers have been included in its 54 issues.

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 homepage): <http://www.namos.co.jp/clark/>

September29,1996=message#5487; Weekly copy #764; "Daily Word" *Echoes* #54; Listeners Meeting #64; Total number of calls (9/80-8/96): 772,977; Average per day: 132; Record number of calls in one day: 5224 (1/14/88)