

"Daily Word" Echoes

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(Essays submitted by listeners/readers on themes of "Daily Word" messages between October 1 and November 5, 1996. Corrected and edited by Clark Offner.)

October 1 Message (Subject #314)

The theme is: a favorite author, book, magazine or newspaper along with the writer's explanation about why he or she likes that particular author, book, magazine or newspaper.

For the last few years I've been fascinated with fables. They are pure, lovely and sometimes critical. Here I would like to write about four writers who are French, British and Japanese.

When I first read "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery in an English translation, I was surprised to find that, to a large extent, it was intended for adults as well as for children. In this fable, a prince visited various asteroids. On the first one, there was a king who felt inordinately proud of being over people and always gave orders. To him, all people were subjects. On the second asteroid lived a conceited man who loved to be admired. Next there was a tippler who drank in order to forget that he was ashamed of drinking. The fourth planet belonged to a businessman who was always counting and recounting his money. Then a geographer appeared who did not have a single explorer on his planet. Selfishness, greed, a desire for fame and so on are sharply criticized. I must confess that I myself have many of these charac-

teristics. This fable stimulates us to reflect on ourselves.

This year is the centennial anniversary of the birth of Kenji Miyazawa. His fables reflect a pure conscience and love for others. Characters such as a scorpion in "Night Train to the Stars", Budori in "The Diary of Gusukho Budori" and "Night-hawk" are all personifications of Kenji and fulfill their duties faithfully. His remark, "I can never be happy unless all are happy", is impressive.

Nankichi Nihimi was born in Handa City in Aichi Prefecture in 1913. His famous work, "Fox Gon", is more practical. Gon is both greedy and conscientious. This fable stimulated a warm feeling in me though Gon was accidentally shot dead at the end.

My favorite British writer is Oscar Wilde, whose fable, "The Happy Prince", is enchanting. The prince gave all his belongings to the townspeople, but still he was happy. This represents love for others along with self-sacrifice, which is found in the fables of Miyazawa, too.

So far, I've noted famous writers. On the other hand, I read an article in a newspaper about a man who received an award as a fable writer. In his fable, a fish made his fellows happy by giving them fine scales, but he also kept his own scales. Everybody, including the hero, became happy and satisfied. According to the article, this was a fable of a new type of modern age. I recognized the meaning, but I felt a little sad and somewhat disappointed. The ideas

of Miyazawa and Wilde may not be practical, but still they are most attractive and fascinating to me.

(TOSHIYUKI KOTERAZAWA, Kasugai)

Reading books concerning history is one of the three greatest interests of mine, together with model railroading and sumo-watching. I am interested in reading historical novels written by such authors as Shiba Ryotarô, Yoshiki Eiji and Inoue Yasushi, who all deal with famous historical heroes. But, above all, what fascinates me most is ancient history, especially of our country.

My first contact with ancient history was through a book titled *Uzumoreta Kin-in* (The Buried Gold Seal), which I read in my high school days. An old Chinese history book, *Gokan-jo*, records that an envoy of a small country, *Na*, in Kyûshû was given a gold seal on which was carved "King of *Na*" by Kobu-tei, an emperor of the Gokan Dynasty, in 57 A. D. About 17 centuries later, in 1784, the gold seal was discovered by chance in Kita-Kyûshû by a farmer. The gold seal is now designated a national treasure after many changes. Since the encounter with this book, I have read many books about our ancient history.

Needless to say, *Kojiki* and *Nihon-shoki* are two great history books which we can value as messengers from ancient times. The books describe how our country came into existence and how it expanded as a state with a *tennô* as the central figure. On the other hand, there are some old Chinese history books, besides the above-mentioned *Gokan-jo*, which depict the situation of our country in ancient times. Among them, *Gishi-wajin-den* is the most famous and important. According to this book, more than 30 small countries, including the above-mentioned *Na*, were subjected to Queen Himiko of Yamatai-koku in the 3rd century. The Queen dispatched an envoy to Rakuyo, the capital of the Gi Dynasty

in 239. The book describes the location of Yamatai-koku, but it is very vague. Therefore, we cannot surmise exactly where the queendom was located. Some scholars insist that it was in Yamato, the present Nara Prefecture. This controversy is called the *Yamatai-koku ronsô* (dispute). What bothers scholars is that the descriptions of the *Kojiki* or *Nihon-shoki* and the *Gishi-wajin-den* are not the same. The former apply to our own country, but fact and fiction are combined in them. The latter seems to be quite precise, but its information is about distant nations. Materials for investigation are all present. Everybody can freely draw inferences from these two types of source materials, relating them to each other and thus can imagine the state of affairs of our country in ancient days.

My collection of books on ancient history has reached a hundred volumes. I will be able to enjoy reading these books, availing myself of the abundant time I will have when I completely retire from my work some day.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

My favorite reading material is Western history, especially during the medieval age. Recently I read books Number 1 to 3 about Montaine, translated by Yoshie Hotta. Another one I read is *Die Vollendung Des Königs Henri Quatre* by Heinrich Mann and translated by Hiroshi Oguri. One more I have read repeatedly is a volume of short stories by O. Henry in English. I feel his compassion in them which we should not forget. Recently, I have developed an interest in Chinese history because it is related to the Chinese poems I enjoy reciting.

I read the *Asahi* and *Chûnichi* newspapers. The *Chûnichi* is more detailed and concerned about this locality. I do not read monthly or weekly magazines.

I could not understand much at all if I did not know the Bible—not only in

regard to literature but also in regard to art and sculpture also. This is my experience. (MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

As a researcher in chemistry, I read many chemical journals and books at my office on weekdays. It's part of my job to keep up with developments in the field. If I didn't read these journals for six months, I might feel completely behind in regard to advances made in chemistry. In addition to such academic publications, I read various kinds of books, magazines and newspapers at home.

One of my favorite authors is Bob Greene. He is a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune* and has written more than ten books, including *Be True to Your School*, *Good Morning*, *Merry Sunshine*, *American Beat* and *Homecoming*. These books are composed of his diaries (the first two), essays (the third) and letters from readers of his column and his comments (the fourth). I read his books in English, so I don't know whether he refers to himself as *watashi*, *boku* or *ore* in the Japanese versions. I can't imagine that he speaks Japanese anyway. His books seem to have what it takes to be best sellers. He was born and grew up in a small town near Columbus, Ohio where I spent two years with my family as a post-doctoral researcher. He sometimes writes about the city in his books. They remind me of our happy days there. I think that is one of the reasons why I like his books.

Another interesting book I have recently read is *Worldwalk* by Steven M. Newman. He started his walk around the globe from his home in Bethel, Ohio in April 1983 and returned there in April 1987. Since he sent reports to the *Columbus Dispatch* along the way, readers of the newspaper could share his experiences during that period. Soon after the completion of his journey, my friend who lived in Columbus sent me a letter, informing me that he had happened to meet Steven Newman in a shopping mall and

had a chance to talk with him. Then I knew he was preparing a book based on the manuscripts sent to the newspaper. His book was finally published in 1989. It was filled with heartwarming stories and adventures. He encountered not only many wonderful people, but also many vicious fellows. He faced many dangers in foreign cities and towns, in mountains and deserts. I believe everyone who read his book would think it is a miracle that he was able to return home safely. It is no exaggeration to say that he was often helped by God. I do not think his book has been translated into Japanese yet. Incidentally, I read a short article about him accompanied by his picture in the *Asahi Shinbun* that noted he started his walk across Japan from Hokkaido about eight years ago. I am very interested to know what happened to him afterwards.

Beside nonfiction books, I sometimes read best selling novels such as those written by Stephen King, Sidney Sheldon, etc. Reading books is not just killing time for me. It provides me with a very enjoyable time of traveling in a world of imagination as well imparting important information.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

I like juvenile literature, such as the "Pooh" stories by A. A. Milne. Since the sixty-first anniversary of my birth, a marked tendency to read books for children has been evident.

When I was in my 20's, I read *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, by Alexandre Dumas, during one summer vacation. I got so excited that I stayed up late to read this long novel in two volumes in Japanese. Especially, I cannot forget what Mercedes, the wife of Fernand who had been an enemy of Dantes Edmond, said to the Count of Monte Cristo, "Let's meet again there", pointing to heaven. And the words, "Wait, and be hopeful", remain in my mind. The novel was entitled *Gankutsu-Oh* in Japanese.

One of my favorite novels by a Japanese author is *Wagahai wa Neko de aru*, by Sôseki Natsume. In this novel, what Kushami Sensei and the people around him thought during the Meiji Era in Japan is written from the viewpoint of a cat. The cat's companions also complained that "Human beings are so selfish, they don't respect the right of cats".

I don't subscribe to a daily newspaper. I read them at the bank when I go there. But I do subscribe to the *Asahi Weekly* periodical in English, which I began to read five years ago. It is very helpful in learning new words in English. It is also convenient for me because I do not have to hurry to finish reading it before the next issue arrives. I look up words in my English-Japanese dictionary, which I take with me everywhere I go. Dictionaries are the best reading material.

I sometimes read cookbooks at a bookstore to find a recipe for my daily meals. As I sometimes buy a book there, the clerk never scolds me for reading as if I were in a library.

Above all, I read the Bible when I don't know how to solve problems. It is true that the words and teachings of the Bible are more understandable than Buddhist sutras. In order to give a talk at Church School, I read the Bible and reference books to try to help pupils understand God's will. In any case, it is the best reading material for our lives.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

I was born in Keijô (today's Seoul) and brought up there. I graduated from a grade school and a middle school before entering the preparatory course of Keijô Imperial University in 1945 when the Pacific War ended. As Japan lost the war, all of us Japanese were compelled to leave Korea. After only four months' experience as a student of that school, I tried to transfer to Matsue High School of the old educational system and, for-

tunately, was admitted after some brief tests. However, the circumstances of my daily life were extremely poor compared to that in Keijô. Food, clothes, writing materials and all other daily necessities were very limited. In addition, due to a lack of study time as a result of the confusion related to our withdrawal from Korea, my studying ability was much lower than that of my classmates. Suffering from the difficult situation, I was so depressed that I often became desperate.

In that situation, I came across a novel written by Doppo Kunikida, who was one of the main novelists of the Meiji era. The title of the book was *Azamukazaru no Ki* ("I'll Honestly Confess"). The book consists of the writer's self-reflection about his deeds in his young days and his self-encouragement to overcome his painful experiences. It seemed very similar to my own situation in the desperate days after the war. I was instantly absorbed into the story which was quite understandable for me and provided both encouragement and refreshment for me. The book really rescued me from the depths of despair that I experienced at that time. Doppo Kunikida is not so well-known as Sôseki Natsume or Ougai Mori, but he is my favorite and most respected author.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

As I noted previously, we have a weekly meeting for reading English books at our *juku* school. Two years ago, I was appointed to select an appropriate book for our group, so I went to the Maruzen Book Store in Sakae. There, the book by Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the 21st Century*, caught my eye.

Paul Kennedy is the author of the 1988 international best seller, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. It took us over two years to read through the 350 pages of the book because we translated assigned portions by turns. What's more,

we had to be precise in our translating, line by line. The author takes up various topics. First, he emphasized the need to reduce the fertility rates in developing countries. If the present level is maintained, India may have the world's largest population, 2 billion, in 2025, surpassing that of China for the first time in recorded history. As a result, the gap between "haves" and "have nots" will get wider and wider. Next, he considers the problems of extracting water from aquifers in the southern Great Plains, the deforestation of tropical rain forests and global warming which causes retreating coastal shorelines due to the rising sea level and so forth.

Since these problems are likely to continue in the 21st century, I think we had better attentively take heed of his warnings and try not to run down the slope of deterioration. Though this book was not easy to read, I think we reaped an abundant harvest after accepting its essential seeds of truth.

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

I have subscribed to the *Mainichi Shinbun* in Japanese and the *Daily Mainichi* in English for about two decades. The latter gives me more detailed news from all over the world. I am interested to know how foreigners view Japan and what they think of Japanese.

When I was young, I lived in Indonesia for about fourteen years, so I have a special concern for that country. Suharto has governed the nation for about thirty years, but that is too long. There is a saying, "when the stream stops running, the water will go bad". His family members have appropriated many national businesses. I still vividly remember when the Marcos family members had to leave their homeland. What will be the fate of the Suharto family?

From the beginning of this year, once a week, both papers print "The Letter from Burma" by Aung San Suu Kyi. I

admire her beautiful sensitive sentences. Six years ago, her group won a landslide victory in the general election, but the junta government ignored the results and suppressed her group. I don't think the junta's illegal regime will last long. When will her dream be realized? This is my second concern.

The other day, I bought a book, *The Monk and His Disciples*, written by Kurata Hyakuro. It was my favorite book when I was young. I read it again and again and was impressed with it. Kurata wrote this book when he was only 27 years old. He was taught by Nishida Tenko, the leader of the religious group *Itto-en*. I once followed Nishida's voluntary movement, cleaning the graveyards in Indonesia. It seems there is a relationship among the Monk, Nishida, Kurata and me.

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

I am ashamed to be quite poor in composing or appreciating poetry. An intimate friend in my college days came to be interested in composing 31-syllable poems and has composed many good ones. Whenever I see her, I am always told about some poem she is enthusiastic about, but I cannot understand her very well and feel sorry for her. If I were like her, I could write down the names of some particular authors here, but I am sorry that I cannot do so. I can just say that I sometimes read some essays or novels and enjoy them very much.

More than half a century ago, when I was in high school, we were not so busy studying as students are today so we could spend much time reading books. Our teacher recommended that we try to read famous masterpieces, as many as possible, when we were young. He said that they continued to be valued because of their unfading worth while most of the popular books in those days would soon be forgotten. I tried to read some books written by Japanese writers and by foreign writers in Japanese transla-

tions. Of course, they were too difficult for me to understand well, but I was deeply impressed with some of them.

I still remember a novel, entitled *Under the Wheels*, by Herman Hesse, a Swiss writer. It described the conflicts of childhood and youth in the provincial world of his native land. I spent much time reading through one novel, entitled *The Revival of Gods—The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci*, by Merezhkovski, a Russian novelist.

I married just after the end of the war and gave birth to two boys. In those days, we had to lead quite a poor, frugal life. My mischievous boys kept me very busy and I had to do almost all house-keeping chores by hand and stayed up until late, making clothes for my family. I had no time to enjoy reading books. I just tried to read those magazines useful for housekeeping or helpful for raising children. Time passed. The boys grew up and left home. Then I came to realize that I was too ignorant of worldly matters. I wanted to study sociology and philosophy and went to an institute for that purpose for a while, but I came to realize that the lectures there were too radical and left-winged, so I stopped attending.

As an old woman, I have seen the drastic change this country has experienced these many years. She arose from the devastation at the end of the war and developed into the second world power, but now everything seems choked and stagnant. We are forced to try to break through this situation with all our might for the benefit of ourselves as well as for the rest of the world. I do not deny that Japanese are intelligent people, but we should remember that we are apt to prefer harmony among ourselves too much and to lose a criterion of justice and injustice. We need wisdom to discern what to improve and what to preserve. Thinking about this problem, I like to read comments on current events

or on economics from various points of view and enjoy them very much.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

I read the *Asahi Weekly*. It is a way to keep from getting old. These days, I am becoming forgetful, but in the "Letters Column" of *Asahi Weekly*, the contributions from people my age or older put my mind at ease and encourage me so I think I will continue reading it at my own pace.

It is enjoyable to read colorful introductions of such little known places as Cuba, Chile, the Channel Islands, etc. I try to read and understand as much as possible without using a dictionary. The articles are rich in content, interesting and written in short sentences. I especially enjoy reading the serialized novel, comics and English conversation using 507 words. Sometime, I may be invited to the preview of a movie if I win a lottery prize.

By the way, I used to read *The Mainichi* a long time ago, but I soon gave up reading it because it was too difficult for my ability. I hope to continue reading the *Asahi Weekly* at my own pace.

(MIEKO OKUMURA, Mizuho, Nagoya)

My favorite newspaper is *Asahi Shinbun*. Every morning I start to read it from the first page. On busy mornings, I read only the headlines, but I never fail to read *Tensei Jingo* on the first page. As you know, *Tensei Jingo* is related to daily events or happenings treated with some humor and ideas of the writer, which I often agree with. The column is enjoyable to read as well as useful for providing topics of conversation with my family or friends.

The other day, Kimiko Date, the 25-year-old professional tennis player announced her retirement. Until reading the explanation given in this column, I could not understand her feeling well even after listening to or reading an in-

interview with her. *Tensei Jingo* explained her retirement in relation to the retirement of the 17-year-old Chinese high diver who won a gold medal in the Atlantic Olympics. I realized once again that the time of retirement is a very important choice for each individual and that retirements of young girls mean the starting point for pursuing other dreams.

(YOSHIKO TOYOTA, Kanie, Aichi)

For the past few years, I have often read works by the acclaimed writer, Shiba Ryōtarō. What has deeply impressed me is his reflective remark on his own writings to the effect that many of them are nothing else than personal letters to himself. When World War II ended in 1945, he seriously wondered what caused his motherland to suffer defeat. What made those stupid leaders of the Japanese Imperial Army lead our nation to ruin? That question became deeply rooted in his mind. Since then, he has devoted all his energy to finding an answer. In the process, he has constructed a monumental edifice of literature and earned his reputation as a great writer.

Recently, I have been enjoying a series of his essays carried in current issues of the weekly magazine, *Shūkan Asahi*. Topics of the essays vary from issue to issue, but they are consistent with his basic position. Take the one in the latest issue (October 18, 1996) as an example. Its theme is Confucian thought in the Edo era and Kusunoki Masashige, a warrior in 14th century Japan who was acclaimed as the incarnation of patriotic loyalty to the Emperor before and during World War II. Confucian thought prevailed among Japanese scholars because the Tokugawa government recognized it as orthodox. While another school of thought, headed by Ogyū Sorai, criticized the ideological bias of that form of Confucianism, the orthodox school highly esteemed Kusunoki Masashige, who gave his life for Emperor Godaigo. Tokugawa

Mitsukuni was a celebrated example of that stream of Confucianistic thought, but later, a great enlightened scholar of the Meiji era, Fukuzawa Yukichi, belittled the past hero as a mere employee who lost his life due to his misadventures.

In due course, the writer mentioned an episode of a student's interview with a contemporary scholar of Confucian thought of the Edo era, Dr. Kano Naoki. In answering a question about the cause of the downfall of Imperial Japan in World War II, the scholar suggested that it was Confucian thought itself that led Japan to ruin. The writer noted his agreement by quoting the episode. His elaborate connecting of episodes into his line of argument is one reason for my admiration. (SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

First of all, before I write about my favorite book I'd like to mention that my favorite reading material is the "Daily Word" messages. Every day the messages not only give us various kinds of information to increase our knowledge but also encourage us to lead a spiritually better life. In my case, the pleasure of savoring "Daily Word" messages comes twice a day—first, when I listen to them and second, when I read them after listening. Although listening to the message helps us increase our listening comprehension, I find more advantages in reading them. For example, I can read at my own pace. Of course, I like Dr. Offner's speaking pace, but when I read them, I can repeat again and again the impressive sentences or words of the day. And I can pause whenever I like in order to think more about certain passages. Many words which I couldn't catch or understand while listening appear in front of me with their correct spellings. I really hope this pleasure will continue as long as possible.

I have several favorite books, but if I am told to choose only one, I must say that it is the book I myself wrote in my

younger days. When I was in my twenties I was absorbed in the subject of the Silk Road, especially Zoroastrianism, and the people who believed in it, so I read many books or materials about them. When I was 24, I was able to make a trip to Central Asia with a famous folklore scholar and a photographer of a large publishing company, visiting old Silk Road towns and villages. Those areas are now independent from Russia, but in those days, they were included in the U. S. S. R., so I studied Russian at a school for one year before making the trip.

The trip was really wonderful and unforgettable. Upon my return, I began writing about our travels in Central Asia about its history, geography, culture, races, religions, food, buildings and so on, including amusing episodes that occurred during the trip. At that time, I was working for a computer company and the time to write was quite limited, so I took about one year to complete the book. I didn't have enough money to publish it, but six years later, when I was working for the Maruzen Book Company, I got a chance to publish it at a reduced cost. I was very happy and entitled it "Towns Wearing Chubicheika", which is an ethnic cap peculiar to those areas.

Usually, I read books simply for pleasure or out of necessity, but some books greatly helped or encouraged me when I was in need. Among those precious books was my own book, but, different from other encouraging books, my book didn't help me by the content. The energy or passion which I had devoted to writing it, surprisingly, came back to me and cheered me up when I was depressed or lost my energy. I never anticipated such a result when I was writing it, full of youth, dreams and vigor. Now I realize that as a reader grows or changes, according to his or her age or experiences, books also begin to show their different, previously unrecognized aspects and that getting older increases the possibility

of discerning other unexpected faces of one particular book.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

October 8 Message (Subject #315)

In the United States and Canada, this week is known as Fire Prevention Week. It is a commemoration of the disastrous fire that erupted in Chicago, Illinois 125 years ago today and has since been known as the Chicago Fire. The fire began in the barn of Patrick O'Leary on Sunday evening following a hot, dry summer. By the time it was extinguished 27 hours later, it had destroyed about 18,000 buildings over some 850 hectares of land, causing almost 300 deaths and \$200 million in damages. Over 98,000 people were left homeless. On the same day, a forest fire destroyed the town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, leaving some 600 dead. The theme suggested for an essay is "Fire". The discovery of how to make fire was important in the development of civilization and some religions consider fire as divine. According to the 3rd chapter of Exodus, God first spoke to Moses through a fire. Fire can be used for both beneficial and destructive purposes. What uses have you made of it? What thoughts, memories or ideas do you have related to it?

My experiences related to fire:

1) It was at a wildlife sanctuary. Many animals were running about trying to escape to a safe place. I watched it nervously.

2) There was a fire at the supermarket in front of our house. The road was wide and the wind was not blowing in

our direction. Many fire engines came and our parking space served as a temporary fire station. The fire was put out after one hour.

3) This event, which happened near our house, I don't like to remember because it was an insurance fraud making use of fire. A furrier planned it and took out high-priced furs to another place before starting the fire. I was astonished to read about it in the newspaper.

4) I also experienced fires during the Second World War. At that time, I had nothing, but now I am living happily, except for problems that face Japan and the world. I have much to thank God for, including a peaceful life.

(I will not be able to write on other themes in this issue of the *Echoes* because I will have eye surgery. Although it is not a serious operation, I must rest my eyes afterwards. To all readers, I say "Take care of your health" and I hope to write for the next *Echoes*.)

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

Until 1989 I worked for a ceramic tile manufacturing company for thirty-six years. The company is big now, but when I entered it, it was small, having a family-like atmosphere. The president was a well-educated and warmhearted person. As a manager, he had a very unique custom. He used to present a birthday cake to employees and have a picture taken together with them on their birthdays after he invited them into his office. It was held during ten minutes of the rest time in the morning. After bringing the cake back home and looking at the candle fires lit on the cake, everybody who was presented with it felt delighted and cherished a deep affection for him. Even now, whenever I see the fire on small candles, I usually recall the president's warm personality.

On the other hand, I have some unpleasant memories of fire. Towards the end of the Pacific War, bombings by the

American bombers became increasingly severe. Most of the big cities were swallowed up by the disastrous fires caused by the bombings and many lives were sacrificed in the sea of fires.

We can find two kinds of fires here. The one related to a well-educated and self-restrained mind and the other to uneducated and quite selfish minds. And they correspond, respectively, to heaven and hell.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

There are some ways by which human beings are distinguished from animals, and one of the most remarkable is related to fire. Animals are afraid of fire. Anthropoids, such as gorillas and chimpanzees, some of which are clever enough to communicate with men using an instrument, still cannot use fire for cooking or warming themselves. When our ancestors started using fire, they took the first step as human beings.

Even after our ancestors acquired the ability to make use of fire, it must have been the object of worship and awe. Hence, Zoroastrianism or Parsiism was generated. (The Japanese faith in the sun is similar in origin.) When I visited India last year, I had a chance to see a chapel of a religion where fire was actually venerated as a divinity. Zoroastrianism was introduced into China in the 5th century and was called Kenkyô, but it never came to Japan. (Some scholars insist, however, that there are some ancient traces of the religion in our country also.)

Human beings have improved the way of using fire throughout their long history. Ancient people used firestones or rubbed a piece of wood with a metal stick to make fire. In my boyhood, we already had gas available in the kitchens of Tokyo homes. But when I moved to a rural district in Hiroshima, I was surprised and disappointed to experience their life without gas. Not to mention

heating the bath, boiling rice and all other cooking was done by a wood fire. Filling the bathtub with water from a distant well and heating it using a bamboo blower was hard work for a young teen-aged boy. In my house now, hot water flows to the bathtub and kitchen directly from an electric water heater just by turning on a tap. This would have been unimaginable fifty years ago.

Fire has completely changed human beings' life. It is indispensable for our civilization, for our cultural life, but, at the same time, fire is our enemy, destroying our civilized society. Fires have damaged a great number of houses throughout the world. This has been particularly evident in our country where houses were generally made of wood and paper. The city of Edo was often visited by disastrous fires during its prosperous periods. The famous *Edo Hi-keshi* (Fire Brigade of Edo) was instituted in order to cope with those fires and thus to keep public order. Once I worked for the Metropolitan Fire Board as chief of the Inspecting Section. It was the section for inspecting houses and buildings for the purpose of fire prevention. Dr. Offner made reference to "Fire Prevention Week" in the United States and Canada. We also have a week for the same purpose. During the week, I made an inspection tour of department stores, etc. in the uniform of a fire department official. Of course, I had no technical knowledge. It was a sort of demonstration. Newspapers reported the event with a photograph of the scene, reporting that "Fire Prevention Week has begun". Now I feel a yearning for that time when I was ashamed of wearing the uniform and raising my hand in salute in public.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

Among the annual events in Japan, there are quite a few that are related to "fire". The Fire Festival, called *Dondo-yaki*, is held around January 14 or 15 at

many places in this country. People bring straw festoons or New Year's decorations made of cuttings from pine trees and bamboo to a nearby shrine and make a bonfire. If one eats rice cakes toasted on this bonfire, it is said that one will avoid catching cold during the year.

Another event heralding the arrival of spring is called *omizutori* (water-drawing ceremony). The sacred water which was sent from Wakasa, Fukui in the previous week reaches Tōdaiji Temple in Nara on March 12 or 13. In the early morning before dawn, young priests brandish huge burning pine branches on the terrace of the Nigatsudō Hall, drawing circles of fire and shaking off sparks and embers on the people gathered there. People on whom the sparks are showered are said to be kept from evil influences.

As these examples indicate, some annual events in Japan are connected with fire. I suppose certain concepts regarding fire lie behind them. From my viewpoint, Japanese people utilize fire to purify or to keep something evil from their surroundings. We do not regard fire as the object of worship as the Zoroastrians of Persia did, but we try to expel what is wicked and get rid of what is corrupt by the force of fire. In addition, these customs imply that Japanese people have a particular inclination toward purification and like to purify things by means of fire, along with water and salt.

Fire is also considered to have a magical power to encourage us and make us warm by its reddish glow. So we feel relieved when we see a bonfire in the dark at *hatsu-mōde* (a New Year's visit to a shrine) on the morning of New Year's Day.

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

As mentioned in the "Daily Word" message of October 8, the word "fire" is often associated with a natural disaster. I vividly remember the picture on television accompanying a news report on the big fire after the Hanshin-Awaji Earth-

quake on January 17, 1995. I realized it was true that fire can destroy everything whereas thieves only steal something precious from one's house.

Another natural big fire which recently impressed me was the fire in Yellowstone National Park in the U. S. in 1988. A recent article in the *National Geographic* states that natural fires are important to keep forests healthy. Therefore, we should not make an effort to control or extinguish forest fires unless they endanger human lives. I was surprised to know that there exists a kind of pine cone that is sealed solidly with rosin, awaiting the next big fire. There are many things we can learn from nature. Anyway, I was happy to see pictures of the park recovering faster than people had previously expected.

On the other hand, people often set fires intentionally to destroy the environment. I was shocked to see an enormous flame in a picture of the dark Amazon which was taken from a satellite at night. I think many people remember that Iraqi soldiers set fires in the oil fields of Kuwait as they retreated just before the end of the Gulf War. I can't see any reason for such stupid behavior.

One of the memorable fires for me this year was that on the torch held by Muhammad Ali at the Olympic Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia. In spite of his poor health, he appeared again in front of us as a hero. In spite of his bitter memories concerning his gold medal, he accomplished the important job as the last athlete to light the Olympic torch. I like to see fire when it brings us hope and happiness, just like the candles on a birthday cake.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

My sister's birthday is March 3rd. That's why she had fine *hina* dolls although she was born in the time of material shortage after World War II. But when the disastrous Ise-wan Typhoon

struck, when she was 12, her *hina* dolls were under water for several days. "You must never throw away any kind of doll", my mother often said to us. "Anything with eyes has its own soul." Even more so, the *o-hina-sama* that protects a girl from evil. The damaged dolls should have been put in the sacred fire in the temple after offering a prayer of thanks. But she preferred to have them float on the peaceful current of a river in the country, following the custom of *Nagashi-bina*, and actually she did so.

Fire and water, as well as many other things in nature, such as the wind, mountains, trees, grass or stones, have been considered sacred and in each of them lives a god, according to Japanese religion in particular. Nature has been held in awe and respect and that has given birth to many different kinds of gods. But those gods in nature are completely different from the concept of God in the Western world and they should be called *kami* or *hotoke* rather than god, because in Japanese religion everything on the earth has the nature of Buddha (*busshô*) which has nothing to do with absolute existence or being the Creator. <

The *hi-no-kami* that we've considered to be in fire, has been familiar to us because we have often used fire in our daily life. Although we call him the god of fire, that doesn't mean fire was created by him. We've just adored fire as something precious and important to us. Likewise, because we are surrounded with various kinds of gods relating to nature, that doesn't necessarily mean that we are unable to think of only one Creator of this universe beyond everything.

This summer, on the evening of August 15, I visited a big Zen temple where a young priest, my acquaintance, was in training. That was the last day of the *obon* period, so I brought our *shôryô-bune* there in order to put it into the fire the temple had prepared. *Shôryô-bune* is a

straw mat-made into the shape of a ship in which some food had been wrapped and placed in front of the altar during the *obon* period. In the middle of the large precincts, much lumber had been arranged in the shape of a box, about 3 meters square and 2 meters high. Many people placed their *shôryô-bune* on top of the wooden structure and the fire burned brightly while some priests chanted a sutra together.

Gazing at the big fire flaring up in the dusk of the evening surrounded by many people offering prayers to the souls of their ancestors, I thought about the nature of the god that is considered to be in fire. If he has a severe and strict nature toward sinful and weak people, the fire may burn them with anger, rebuke or punishment, even though they approach him asking for help or forgiveness. But if his nature is full of mercy and love, the fire will make their cold bodies warm and minds relieved. bodies

In the face of a nature that is too rigid, a weak mind cannot be saved and however hard we may try, human beings are fundamentally weak, I think. But is it quite natural for such people to be burned in the fierce fire of justice? Is it a lukewarm or too flexible god that accepts even those people in his warm hands?

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

Fire is what we are most afraid of now. When my father was alive, we did not realize the extent of my mother's senility. He sometimes complained about her loss of memory, but we ignored it, thinking that one's memory naturally deteriorates with age. After my father's death, we now have to take care of my mother and realize how difficult it is to care for her.

One morning, I went into her room to awaken her. I felt the room was very hot, but at first, I didn't know the reason. Looking around, I saw that the gas burner

was lit. There was no water in the kettle on it. I suspected that she wanted to boil water the previous night and then forgot about it.

One day, I entered her room and smelled propane gas. I asked her what she was doing. Senility seemed to have eliminated her sense of smell. I told her not to light a fire at that time and opened the windows. At last, I decided to replace the gas range with an electromagnetic cooker. After some difficulties and short circuits, she has now learned how to use it.

She sometimes sits in front of the family Buddhist altar and puts incense sticks in the pot. If these sticks fell down, perhaps they would start a fire, so I told her not to stand them up in the pot but to lay them down. I am not sure whether she really understood my advice, but we cannot force her to pray for her husband without incense sticks.

The most difficult thing in caring for senile persons is that they are so sensitive to being humiliated that we cannot follow the preferred method to prevent fires. If we do so and upset them, they might fall into a rage and tell us to leave. For now, we must watch her behavior carefully and only hope for good luck. (YOSHIHISA KAWAHARA, Mihama, Aichi)

One of our human abilities is to make and control fire. Everyday we use fire to cook food and to warm ourselves. Nowadays, we also use electric and gas appliances for both purposes. Until the 1950s, we used wood and charcoal in stoves, ranges, *kotatsu* and *kairo*. Now, I sometimes burn fallen leaves in the church garden with Sunday School children or watch a campfire in the summer. I can imagine fire to be a living thing with its great flame resembling moving tongues and its sounds of crackling, but fire itself does not have its own will to grow. It is human beings who feed fire with fuel and who can make fire for ben-

eficial purposes or quench it to keep their possessions from being consumed. If one strikes a match irresponsibly, it is dangerous. And we must never forget to turn off the switch of an electric or gas appliance after using it.

In the spring of 1979, I visited Kyoto for the first time in my life. My initial impression of Kyoto Station was its plainness in comparison with stations of other big cities. Recently I learned that the former station in Kyoto had been destroyed by a fire almost 30 years previously, in the early morning of November 18, 1950. It was a fine Renaissance-style building made of wood, built in 1914 in memory of Emperor Taishō. The second floor of the station was used as a restaurant and a steward working there left an iron heated, which was the origin of the fire. How terrible this kind of carelessness is. If we had no fire, we would have fewer disasters, but we would remain as primitive people. So let us thank God for the fire of the sun, electricity, gas and matches and for the wisdom to use and control them.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

I always wonder why so many people walk along the street with a lighted cigarette in their hand. They seem totally unaware that they are carrying something that can easily set inflammable materials on fire. In fact, they ignore serious accidents in which a lighted cigarette carried by a walking man burned a little girl's eye or injured a small boy's face in a crowded place.

I also wonder why people smoke a cigarette while driving a car which has a gasoline tank in it. They seem not to realize that they are carrying something so inflammable as gasoline. They know very well that a lighted cigarette is not allowed in a gas station. It is really a great wonder that they carry such a dangerous thing in such a dangerous place as a car without serious accidents.

I cannot help remembering the sad fact that every year discarded cigarette butts are at the top of the list of causes of big fires reported annually by fire stations. People cannot entirely escape from carelessness. So the way to avoid the risk of causing a fire is fairly simple. When you smoke, be aware that you are carrying a fire. When you stop smoking, you must extinguish the fire without fail. Be sure the fire is out!

You should not forget, above all else, that fire is a double-edged sword. Fire has served mankind as an indispensable source of heat and light. On the other hand, fires have caused the loss of countless lives plus valuable possessions.

In Zoroastrianism, fire is worshipped. Some Buddhist temples in Japan light a holy fire for an invocation. People gaze in awe at a crackling fire. Fire, an object of respect and worship, is a great mystery.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

In Japan, September 1st is designated Disaster Prevention Day and the week including that day is Disaster Prevention Week to commemorate the devastation of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. A nationwide campaign and various kinds of disaster-prevention training, including fire-prevention are held to raise the consciousness of the people against disasters. In November, when people begin to turn their heaters on, Autumn Fire Prevention Week is held and in March, when strong spring winds begin to blow, Spring Fire Prevention Week is observed by fire stations all around the country.

Today, many wooden houses in the country have been replaced by concrete ones, but Japanese remember the horrors of great earthquakes and the following fires quite well. Japanese history indicates that Kyoto, the capital of Japan for many years, was devastated many times by accidental fires or wartime fires and almost all precious wooden

--buildings before the 15th century were burnt down and works of art were lost forever. Edo was burnt down several times, making almost the entire population homeless and killing many people and so was Tokyo in the Great Kanto Earthquake. Especially the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995 was quite astonishing and should be a lesson for us all to be constantly alert to prevent disasters.

I have taken part as a team member in community activities held by the Japan Red Cross Service Team and as a collaborator in a Disaster Prevention Team of the fire department. They hold fire prevention exercises and anti-disaster training, including first aid, every year in the community. I urge others to try to participate in such training actively as often as possible to get used to the techniques.

The Tokyo Fire Department says that most fires are caused by arson. We should inspect the outside of our houses and try not to put anything that burns easily nearby. Inside the house, we should not put any inflammable objects near the kitchen range or heaters. A fire extinguisher or a bucket of water should be quickly available near our fuel dispensers. Filling the bath tub with water is desirable. To correctly counteract fire with a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher requires some technique. It is necessary to get used to fire-fighting devices through training courses. When fire breaks out at home, immediately dial 119 and calmly report the fire, the address and landmarks, name and phone number. When evacuation is necessary, be sure to remember that human life is most valuable and never go back into the house to take out belongings.

In Japan, where earthquakes strike very often, disaster-prevention training is especially important. The Tokyo metropolitan government issued helpful guidelines on what to do during an earthquake: 1) At home, get under a table to

make you and your family safe. 2) Turn off the gas; if fire breaks out, extinguish it quickly. 3) Do not panic and rush outdoors. 4) Open the door to secure an exit. 5) Outside, protect your head and avoid dangerous falling objects. 6) In a car, pull over to the left and stop. 7) If someone is injured, give them the necessary first aid. 8) If an evacuation advisory is issued, go by foot, carry a minimum of necessities and cooperate with others. 9) Follow official information; don't act on rumors. 10) Emergency preparations are the key to minimizing damage.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

October 15 Message (Subject #316)

In Japan these days foreign-made articles, including handbags, satchels, briefcases and the like are quite popular. Though expensive, some people are willing to pay for the added prestige or sophistication they represent. In the old days, such containers were not needed because of a unique Japanese article which was much simpler and more convenient. The square piece of cloth called a furoshiki, or bath cloth, was originally used in connection with the public bath. This wrapping cloth, like Japanese philosophy, is flexible and can be used to carry many different kinds of articles, for its shape changes depending upon its contents rather than keeping the firm form of Western-style bags or concepts. In former days, take-home presents for wedding guests were usually tied in a furoshiki. Furoshiki is the suggested theme for an essay this week. What do you think of these wrapping cloths. Do you ever use one these days? Did you use one in the past? What thoughts or memories does this word bring to your mind?

What are its advantages? Why is it not so popular these days and what do you think about its future?

I was enrolled in the preparatory course of Keijō (now Seoul) Imperial University for four months until the end of the Pacific War. Professor Ohta, who taught us English, used to use a *furoshiki* for carrying his textbooks and other reference books into the lecture room. I don't know of anyone else at that school who brought books tied in a *furoshiki*. It is true that cloth and leather were very rare during the wartime due to a general shortage of materials. Be that as it may, to see such a person as Professor Ohta using a *furoshiki* was rather odd.

In regard to my own experience, I used a *furoshiki* in order to take a big vase as a present to a Korean friend of mine on my recent trip to Korea. At first, I tried to take it in a paper bag, but it was too big. So I decided to wrap it in a large-size *furoshiki* and to make a present of the *furoshiki* itself also. I thought the light purple *furoshiki* was rather pretty as well as useful and an appropriate gift for a foreigner.

Considering convenience, a *furoshiki* is less handy than a paper bag. For that reason, *furoshiki* will become less and less popular, just like shoes with laces are becoming less popular than those without laces.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

Hearing the word *furoshiki*, I recall an anecdote from my younger days, when I was keeping company with a group of foreigners. One of them, who was a newcomer to our country, said in halting Japanese: *okusan ni furoshiki*. At first, people could not understand his words, but after a moment, they burst out laughing, realizing that he had meant to say

yoroshiku. It was quite understandable, I thought, for the foreigner to make such a mistake in the use of words because he did not know the origin of the words.

As Dr. Offner explained, *furoshiki* literally means "bath cloth". It was originally used to wrap one's clothes at a public bathhouse or, sometimes, to sit on after taking a bath. It is a scarf-like square cloth, usually made of silk or cotton, but recently, synthetic materials are also used. Most of those in daily use are decorated with artistic pictures, such as flowers, trees and scenery. *Furoshiki* are also used on formal occasions. For example, when we bring *oseibo* to an acquaintance, we wrap and carry the things in a *furoshiki*. The *furoshiki* used for this purpose is usually decorated with the family crest of the owner. A small crepe wrapper called a *fukusa* is a kind of *furoshiki*, which we saw recently in the Diet. When the House of Representatives was dissolved the other day, a purple *fukusa* was brought to the place of Ms. Doi, the speaker of the House, and she took out the Imperial Rescript of Dissolution and read it aloud.

A *furoshiki* is a traditional and unique Japanese article. It is really a very useful thing. It is flexible and can be used to wrap many kinds of items, no matter whether they are big or small, square or round, heavy or light. A colloquial phrase, *oh-furoshiki o hirogeru* (to spread out a big wrapper), is applied to an overly confident man who exaggerates, boasting that he can carry more in his *furoshiki* than is possible. When we use a Western suitcase or briefcase, we have to bring it back even after it is emptied, but a *furoshiki* can be folded up and kept in one's pocket when not being used. It is very simple and convenient.

When I belonged to the Ministry of Home Affairs, I had many opportunities to attend meetings of Diet committees. I used to take a *furoshiki* to carry the necessary documents for deliberation.

Most of the government delegates did the same, following the example of their seniors. I never saw a government delegate carrying a briefcase for that purpose.

Although the *furoshiki*'s compactness and flexibility still attract many people, young people are seldom seen using them these days. They are gradually being replaced by handbags and shopping bags. Maybe they think *furoshiki* are unattractive and old-fashioned. I think this tendency is quite regrettable because the *furoshiki* is one of the greatest inventions of our ancestors which we can be proud of throughout the world.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

When I had to carry something too large to put into my school knapsack, I sometimes used a *furoshiki*. But that was in the late 1950s when I went to elementary school. These days, I only use it to keep clothes together before I put them into my large traveling bag.

We used to take a shopping bag from home since clerks usually didn't give us a large bag at stores. When my mother bought too much to fit in the bag, she took out a *furoshiki* and wrapped things in it. Because it was able to be folded up, it served as a good spare container. The unpopularity of *furoshiki* at present may be due to the prevalence of plastic bags at supermarkets.

We also used to consider *furoshiki* as an important wrapper. It seemed formal to wrap things in it when it was made of silk. If one wore a kimono, it went well with it. Therefore, the decreasing opportunities of wearing kimono may have something to do with the decline of its popularity.

By the way, do you know where we may buy a national flag, *hinomaru*, in a department store? Believe it or not, it is at a *furoshiki* counter. Clerks categorize the flag as a kind of *furoshiki*. Although I am not an extreme nationalist, I feel strange about that. I cannot pledge

allegiance to a *furoshiki* you know.
(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

The name of the 'wrapping cloth', or *furoshiki*, is derived from the use made of it in ancient times when all homes did not have a bathroom. There were public bathhouses in the neighborhood and most people went there, taking a change of underwear in a wrapping cloth bundle. Before taking a bath, they took off their clothes and wrapped them in the cloth and put the bundle in the dressing room. After the bath, they undid the cloth-wrapped parcel, dried off and then put on their clothes. Since it was used to wipe off wet feet in the bathroom, it was called a *furoshiki*, meaning *furo ni shiku*. In the Edo period, it was also used as a hood, like that called a *zokin*.

It is convenient to use as a head covering when it suddenly begins to rain or gets cold. Also, it's very convenient for carrying things of any size and shape. Nowadays, old people carry one as a necessary item when they go out. There is a saying "She married into a family with nothing but her personal effects tied in a *furoshiki*." It means that a poor girl who got married had nothing but her clothes and daily necessities carried in a wrapping cloth. In ancient times, many poor girls are said to have married like that. The word "wrapping cloth bundle" has the implication of "very poor".

(MIEKO OKUMURA, Mizuho, Nagoya)

At the present time, *furoshiki*s are being displaced by paper bags, but some are still being used. According to the season, I wrap clothes in a *furoshiki* which are supposed to be given at weddings.

I heard that at the Matsuzakaya Department Store, they sold Utamaro's *furoshikis* and foreigners liked them. So I bought one and sent it to my pen pal. She wrote in her letter, "I am using it as a neckerchief". (YASUKO IZUMI, Seto)

November 1st, after working at the office, I went to see Mr. Hamada's painting in an exhibition with Ms. Okumura. (Both of them have become my friends through the "Daily Word" listeners meetings.) All the way to the exhibition hall and back home, I tried to find someone carrying something in a *furoshiki*, but I found no one, even though I went through Nagoya Station. A *furoshiki* seems fitting for a person wearing a kimono, I think, but even such persons had leather, cloth or paper bags. I have five or more *furoshiki*, but recently I never use them.

When I was enrolled in a dressmaking class, I used to wrap cloth materials in a *furoshiki* to avoid wrinkling them and then put them into a paper bag because it was more convenient to carry than just the *furoshiki* package. Furthermore, I used a *furoshiki* to wrap around a big bottle (*isshô-bin*) when I was sent to get soy sauce from a nearby maker in my elementary school days. In those days, we didn't have other suitable sacks or bags in which to carry things.

A *furoshiki* may have some advantages such as saving materials by its repeated use or because it is so flexible, but the fact that few persons use it now indicates that it is not so convenient in modern life. I think a cloth bag is more convenient and can also be used repeatedly. We should use it as much as possible, rather than paper or plastic bags given at supermarkets, to conserve materials and not to increase garbage.

(YOSHIKO TOYOTA, Kanie, Aichi)

I am sure no containers are more convenient than *furoshiki* with their many sizes and kinds of cloth. They remind me of the time when my father was to have his own office at Tôhoku Gakuin High School as a principal 59 years ago. He bought a round and flat wooden box to put a set of tea utensils in to use in his office. He showed it to us before taking it to the school, but he found it difficult

to wrap up in the paper and tie it with a string again in order to carry it. In those days, we had no big, strong paper bags with a handle to carry things. Of course, he could not carry it in his school bag, either. Then I gave him the advice, "You had better carry it in a *furoshiki*." "Yes, that is a very good idea. You are very smart," father said.

When I first began living in Haranomachi in 1964, my mother gave me a big *furoshiki*, about 1.5 square meters, saying, "If you have to take refuge in the neighborhood in case of fire, it will be useful to put in various kinds of valuables and carry them on your back." Fortunately, I had no need to use it for that purpose. I thought that a *furoshiki* was originally very big and used for wrapping up a bathtub to take out in case of fire, but that was a mistake.

These days, there are many foreign-made containers which are very popular in Japan. Almost all Japanese wear Western-style clothes and have handbags, rucksacks, satchels or brief cases in which to carry things. So we don't have to use *furoshiki* as we did in the old days because many stores provide paper or plastic bags when we buy something. But when we wear Japanese kimono at commencement ceremonies or wedding parties, we use *furoshiki* to wrap our things in and for the take-home presents. Sometimes, *furoshiki* become an accessory to match our kimono. Thus, as long as Japanese-style clothes are worn by the people, *furoshiki* made of silk crepe will also be used.

When people realized the problems connected with plastic bags—the enormous refuse they create, the poisonous gas produced after burning or remaining in the ground after burying them and not knowing how to dispose of the many plastic products, they began to refuse the plastic bags and began using cotton *furoshiki* again. They are washable, flexible, reusable and come in various sizes,

the most reasonable container in the world. (KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

I associate *furoshiki* with a funny-sounding word: "*Nabiro*". "*Nabiro*?" When I first heard this word, I couldn't catch the meaning right away. "Yes, *na-biro*, *na o hiro suru*, to introduce one's name to people." "Oh, now I understand. And whose name?" "Your name!" I remember the little conversation I had with my mother while making wedding preparations many years ago.

Furoshiki had been chosen to introduce the bride's name to the people, especially those on the bridegroom's side. On the *noshi*-paper on the little *furoshiki* box, the bride's name was written in fine calligraphy and added to other wedding gifts prepared for each guest present at the wedding ceremony.

As soon as my husband and I returned from our honeymoon, his mother asked me, in a reserved manner, to visit several families in their neighborhood with her in a formal kimono. "What an old-fashioned custom!" My husband first objected to it, but I had to think of her situation and was not troubled by it. From one house to another, she handed my *nabiro furoshiki* to each neighbor, saying, "We now have one more daughter." I clearly recall her words as well as the nice pattern and beautiful color of the *furoshiki*. She didn't say, "This is our *yome-san*" and that reflected her considerate character.

Now, I have many *furoshiki* and most of them are *nabiro furoshiki* of my friends, relatives and colleagues, received at their weddings long ago. When I use them, I imagine those shy, innocent brides who have become middle-aged, experienced housewives or school-career-oriented mothers of their children.

Times have changed. *Furoshiki* have been replaced by various kinds of *nabiro* goods such as spoons, luncheon mats, potholders or a bud vase, which are now

more often used in our daily lives. And it has become very common that both given names of bridegroom and bride are written on the *noshi*-paper. Now that we live in the time when more and more brides insist on their surnames being unchanged, soon we may see new types of *nabiro* gifts showing both names with different surnames.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

It is said that "*furoshiki*" originated from words meaning "bath wrapping cloths" in the Edo period. In those days, when going to a public bath, people used a *furoshiki* for wrapping their clothes. It was very convenient for wrapping, storing or carrying things.

At the time of my wedding, a box of *furoshiki* was presented not only to the guests but also to the neighbors to introduce the new couple (whose names were on the wrapping paper). The *ohburoshiki*, a large *furoshiki*, in which my wedding *futon* was wrapped had the original design of a green arabesque pattern. My mother-in-law had sewed some pieces of the *ohburoshiki* by hand, making good use of old *futon* cloths. They were very useful and flexible to wrap such things as big *futons* and cushions. Sometimes, they were used to cover things that needed to be hidden. I still treasure them as her mementos.

There is a colloquial phrase, *ohburoshiki o hirogeru*. This is applied to a man who exaggerates or boasts that he can carry more in his *furoshiki* than is actually possible. As times have changed these kinds of things and words related to them do not seem so popular these days. However, I'd like to recognize the value of this traditional, unique article. One may use it as a scarf or as an artistic adornment. It might also become nice material for quilting. I hope many fresh ideas will enrich our lives. Never say die, *furoshiki*!

(SADAE HASHIMOTO, Minami, Nagoya)

I used to carry some books and documents in my *furoshiki* on my way to and from my workplace when I worked for a textbook publishing house as a member of the editorial staff. One day, a colleague of mine asked me why I carried a *furoshiki* instead of an ordinary bag like other people used. I answered, as an advocate of *furoshiki*, that his question indicated his ignorance of the merits of the wrapping cloth. Saying so, I folded my *furoshiki* up and put it in my pocket. "Can you put your bag into your pocket when you do not use it?" I asked him.

Instead of having a shape of its own, a *furoshiki* has versatile merits. It is nothing but a square thin piece of cloth, with each side less than a meter long, but it is quite versatile. It can instantly change into a muffler in the cold or into a first aid bandage for an injury.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Sugunami, Tokyo)

October 22 Message (Subject #317)

The inspiration for today's theme came while looking at a Japanese reference book which stated that on this day (October 22nd) in 1933, a ringo jiken occurred in connection with a Sôkei-sen, (Waseda/Keiô University competition). I have no idea what the "Apple Incident" involved, but I am suggesting "Apples" as the subject for essays this week. Apples are a popular fruit in Japan, but the United States is accusing Japanese officials of raising unreasonable barriers to their importation from the U. S. Do you like apples? Do you eat them often? What thoughts or memories do you have regarding apples, how they are grown and how they are used?

When I heard the term *ringo jiken*, "Apple Incident", I was very curious to know the name of the reference book in which it was found. [Editor's note: It is 365 *Nichi Jiten*, *Kyô wa Donna Hi ka*, published by *Shakai Shisô-sha*.] I haven't heard the word for more than 25 years. I was acquainted with it because I was a student of Keiô for 15 years, from junior high school through graduate school. As mentioned in the message, the incident happened during a baseball game between Waseda and Keiô universities, a so-called *Sôkei-sen*. (I don't know how Keiô students call it now, but we used to call it *Keisô-sen*, putting Keiô first.)

It occurred before the Second World War when Mizuhara (who, after graduating from Keiô University became a star player of the Yomiuri Giants and, later, the team manager) was the third baseman on the Keiô University team. An apple was thrown from Waseda's cheering section and landed on the ground near Mizuhara. (At that time, Waseda supporters sat on the left side of the stadium. At present, they sit on the right side.) He threw it back into the stand. From that moment, outraged students rushed onto the ground and, of course, the game could not continue. In the long history of the *Sôkei-sen*, that was the only incident which we cannot talk about proudly. The reason why a student threw the apple was not clear, because it was not known who threw it and Mizuhara did not talk about it before he died.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

We should be careful in considering the exact correspondence between Japanese and English words. For example, many people think that Japanese *ringo* is the equivalent of the English "apple", but that is not correct. What is called *ringo* today is equivalent to the "apple" which had been cultivated from of old in Europe and was introduced to our country early in the Meiji era. But before the in-

roduction of the European apple, there was already a fruit called *ringo*, which had been introduced from China in ancient days. This species is much smaller and tastes sour. It bears a faint resemblance to an apple. Even today, it is called *wa-ringo* (Japanese *ringo*) or *ji-ringo* (native *ringo*). By the way, *kirin* was not originally used for the animal we call a giraffe. A *kirin* was a fiery horse, an imaginary animal in old China, which had the body of a deer, the tail of a cow, the hoof of a horse, the forehead of a wolf and a big horn in the center of its head. We can see it on the label of Kirin Beer. When a giraffe was imported to Japan, people were puzzled about what to call it and finally chose *kirin*. This is similar to the case of *ringo* insofar as their names are concerned.

Europe is in the same latitude as Hokkaido and northern Honshu. Therefore, European apples are cultivated in the northern part of our country. The Tohoku District is the main area of apple production. In my boyhood, the distribution of goods was not so easy as today and so an apple was an article of value in my hometown in Hiroshima. Apples were often used as gifts to sick people. We could seldom eat them. By the way, bananas were much more precious because they were, needless to say, imported all the way from the South Seas area.

Today, as a result of developing and improving the plant, apples have become bigger and sweeter than before. Some of them have honey in the center. We seldom find a sour apple today. Apples are tinged with red, from whence comes the expression "an apple-cheeked boy". In our country, *ringo* often is included in popular songs, maybe because they are lovely and sweet. In the wartime, it was prohibited to compose or to sing popular songs. At that time, songs meant martial or other songs to inspire people with patriotism. The first popular song

after the war was *Ringo no Uta*. When Namiki Michiko, a female singer, sang this song, people felt at peace and realized that the war had truly ended. She is in good health even now and sometimes appears on television, singing the same song. When I hear her singing the song, I am filled with deep emotion, recalling the former days.

I know the word "apple polisher", which means one who fawns on his or her superior. Our expression for that is *goma-suri*, which literally means one who pounds sesame seeds. You should know that the expression "to polish the apple" can be used for the meaning mentioned above.

(YOSHIHIKO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

Dr. Offner indicated that he has no idea what the "Apple Incident" involved, so I will write about that before my comments about the main subject, "Apples".

Baseball games among the six universities in Tokyo in prewar days were more popular than those among the professional baseball teams in the postwar days. Many star players were produced by the teams of those six universities. Waseda and Keiō, both of which are representative, historic private universities, especially, had a large number of fans. Their games were always scheduled on the final day of a tournament regardless of their standing. That is to say, their game was always the climax of the baseball season. Many fans gathered in the Meiji Shrine Ball Park, crowded into the stands and cheered for their favorite team. The number of students who came to encourage their teams was much larger than today.

The "Apple Incident" occurred at such a time. As games between Waseda and Keiō were invariably close, it was natural that the supporters from both universities were extraordinarily excited. When the Waseda team was at bat, an apple was thrown into the infield by

an excited student from the stand on the Waseda side. It rolled near Shigeru Mizuhara, who was at the "hot corner" (third base). Members of both teams were usually well-disciplined and refrained from responding emotionally to any untoward incidents, as good sportsmen, but Shigeru became very angry at the impolite behavior of the Waseda fan. He picked up the apple with his right hand and threw it back into the stand filled with Waseda students.

Some people criticized his agitated response, but baseball fans in general sympathized with him and even considered his action heroic. The incident was settled later through negotiations between supporting groups of both universities.

After his graduation from Keiô, Mr. Mizuhara was drafted into the army, fought in Manchuria, was captured by the Russian army and was forced to work in Siberia for several years after the war. Around 1948, when he was fortunately released from the Siberian labor camp, he appeared before baseball fans at the Kôrakuen Ball Park. I myself was there as a spectator of a professional baseball game and watched him as he gave a greeting upon his arrival back home, clad in a snow-white sack coat.

He was really a handsome man, so he was liked by many young women. He was romantically linked with Kinuyo Tanaka, a leading actress of the Shôchiku Motion Picture Company, but they did not get married. Afterward, he became manager of the Yomiuri Giants, the most famous professional baseball team in Japan.

In regard to apples in general, I recall two popular songs of the old days. One is "Under the Apple Tree" (*Ringo no Ki no shita de*), sung by Dick Mine in pre-war days. The other is "The Song of the Apple" (*Ringo no Uta*), sung by Michiko Namiki around the end of the war. Both of them were very popular and stimulated sweet, tender and encouraging emo-

tions. I will never forget the melodies of either of them.

I also remember the redness of the apple embroidered on the decorated robe (*kishô mawashi*) of sumo wrestler Taikyûzan around 1940. He was a Japanese born in Taikyû (now known as Taegu) in Korea, which was very famous for producing tasty apples. I have always enjoyed eating sweet apples.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

On today's "Weekly News for Children" on NHK, the question was raised why children eat less and less fruit although there are more kinds of fruit available than previously. According to the program, there are about 300 kinds of fruit available in Japan today, but the amount eaten by each family is one-third of that of a generation ago.

Two children were sent by the program director to interview an elementary school class in Tokyo regarding the kind of apple they preferred, whether sweet or sour. Most pupils said they liked sweet ones, but they preferred sweet snacks to apples. The program raised the question of which is healthier, fruit or fruit juice? It requires several fruits to make one can of juice, but one fruit is equal to 70 cans of juice in regard to the amount of dietary fiber. "Apples" is the suggested theme for an essay. I have decided to consume more fruit, including *mikan*s, apples and kiwi fruit myself and to let my children eat them more often than before.

Speaking of apples, there is a couple now living in Aomori that immediately comes to mind. They used to attend the same church we do. Mr. and Mrs. Saito are now apple farmers. They used to work for Ohkuma Steelworks and had been assigned to a branch factory in Australia before they began attending our church. While they were with us, Mr. Saito decided to quit his job and go back to his hometown in Aomori where his

father, once a junior high school principal, manages an apple orchard.

Karen, a friend of ours from Australia and a coordinator for KGK (*Kirisuto-sha Gakusei Kai*) visited the Saitos in Aomori and found them living a leisurely life working in an apple orchard. Now, whenever I eat apples, I think of Mr. and Mrs. Saito and their cute baby girl, Reina, wishing them a happy and prosperous life in Christ.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

Dr. Offner mentioned that on October 22, 1933, the "Apple Incident" occurred in connection with a *Sôkei-sen*. At that time I was a ten-year-old elementary school girl and did not know about that, but I still remember the feverish atmosphere related to a *Sôkei-sen*. In those days, professional baseball was not so popular as today. People enjoyed university baseball games more and among them the spirit stimulated by the competition between Waseda and Keiô universities was outstanding. We can easily imagine that the spectators were so excited that they may have become violent and threw apples during the game.

Before the war, when I was a child, Japan was not so affluent as today, but the food situation was far better than during the war. Though the variety of fruit was limited, apples, mandarin oranges and persimmons were most popular. Maybe, people in the northern part of Japan ate more apples and those in the southern part enjoyed more oranges. In those days, transportation facilities were not so advanced as today.

I have many happy memories concerning apples. Every fall, my uncle in Hokkaido sent us many apples. I vividly remember our joy when the boxes were opened. It may have been unusual in those days, but my mother learned how to make Western dishes and cakes from her sister-in-law and got an oven. It was quite a small one which was placed on a

gas range when used. She made apple pies and baked apples by using the oven which was not so efficient. She tried hard and when the pies turned out well, she was very thrilled and so were us children. I am still thankful for the loving kindness of my mother and my uncle who passed away long ago.

The apple tree belongs to the rose family and Japan had her own native ones, but their fruit was too tart to be eaten. The trees planted to produce edible apples were imported from Western countries in the early years of the Meiji Era. Generally speaking, Japanese are quite diligent and willing to take meticulous measures when they are considered necessary. Traditionally, their sense of taste has been refined and they have made a continuing effort to develop better quality produce. Consequently, they have been very good at breeding fruit.

The apples we tasted before the war were different than those which are popular now. When fall came, an early type of apple matured first. Then, a mid-fall type and a late-fall type came out one after another, but none of them lasted very long. In season, they were very good, but they soon lost their original flavor.

Time passed and the technology for improving the quality of fruits has remarkably advanced. Likewise, we can see a great progress in producing, storing, transporting and marketing fruits. Now we can enjoy almost any kind of fruit from all over the world at any time through all seasons. We should realize the benefits we can enjoy now and give thanks for the enormous efforts required to bring them about. At the same time, we should consider whether we have been so deeply involved in commercialism that we have followed inhuman methods in the process.

These days, apples named Fuji are quite popular. Certainly, they are very delicious and durable, but I sometimes wonder whether they have lost the na-

tural taste of the original apples which were sour. My daughter-in-law in London said that Japanese Fuji apples were sold there. They are quite expensive, but highly appreciated. Certainly it is good news for us, but I cannot help wondering whether we have followed an unnatural way in cutting down old apple trees still bearing fruit to replace them with new ones and in erecting barriers to protect our domestic industry from the outside world.

(MICHIKO KAWAMURA, Meguro, Tokyo)

The most delicious apple I have ever eaten in my entire life was the dish of grated apples my mother gave me when I was confined in bed with a cold. Some sixty years have passed since then and I have never forgotten the fine flavor of the apple I tasted as a little boy.

It is now late in the fall, the height of the season for apples, the fruit of the earth. A bite of an apple produces both an enjoyable flavor and fragrance. It also stimulates in me a precious sense of health with its slightly sour and sweet flavor. But, sorry to say, I do not have the background to explain what apples are. Originally the fruit came from America and was assimilated through breeding. We have many kinds of apples on the market. I prefer red ones to green ones. This is because the latter look sourer than the former.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

Apples are my favorite of favorites. It is no exaggeration to say that I cannot last even one day without an apple. I'm very careful not to run out of apples in my refrigerator. My children also like apples so much that I have to buy them almost every other day. I usually buy them at a fresh food store where we can get delicious and cheap apples in season accompanied by the shopkeeper's smile.

Unfortunately, there are a few times during the year when apples disappear

from all-the fresh food stores and supermarkets near my home, except for very expensive ones used for special gifts. At such times, I go to a special shop. It is a very little, old shop with quite limited kinds of fruit but where apples are sure to be available all the year round. The old man in the shop always sits on a chair in the dark, wooden shop watching television or taking a nap. It seems few customers come to buy. On an old wooden box at the left side of the shop, apples are placed carelessly. What precious apples they become when no other shops have them.

But there is one big problem about that shop. It is the very nasty smell around the apple stand. I soon realized that the unendurable odor was characteristic of cat dung. How awful cat dung smells. I know very well because I spent my childhood with several pet cats. There is a narrow space next to the left side of the shop and from there the odor invades the apple area. I imagine the shopkeeper's sense of smell must be dull. At first, I tried to hold my breath while I bought apples, but the old man's movements were so slow that I couldn't continue to the end. So I decided to purchase apples there only in the case of necessity. In that case, I first empty my lungs several meters away from the shop. Then I breathe in deeply to fill both lungs. Finally, holding my breath, I make a dash for the apples.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

In regard to apples, I was born in Aomori, where many apples are produced. In my childhood, even after we moved to Sendai, we usually ate apples everyday after supper. Our father used to pare the apples for us. Mother said, "Anyone who eats an apple everyday will become a beauty." She sometimes boiled apples to make jam. I also liked apple juice. In those days, apples were sent from Aomori to many parts of Japan in big wood-

en boxes stuffed with chaff. We got excited when the box was opened by father or brother with a hammer's claw. Sometimes I ate an apple with its skin on. The chaff was made into pillows for our family and the wooden box was used as a container afterwards.

A few years ago, Ms. Janell Landis and her English students in Fukushima were invited to the apple orchard in Date Machi, belonging to the Kanebo family, whose mistress was our classmate. We enjoyed plucking apples from the short trees which are called Fuji. We peeled off the skin with a knife and ate them. Those apples were big and sweet, having honey inside. They had another apple orchard of Kôgyoku (Red Jewel). This kind of apple is very red but somewhat rare now. It is a little sour and good for apple cakes. They told us how they had eliminated superfluous fruit and covered the remaining fruit with paper bags to keep them from insects and agricultural chemicals during certain periods. From the ancient story in Genesis, apples were considered forbidden fruit. It was good that Adam did not choke after swallowing an apple which stayed in his throat.

Soon after the Pacific War, the first domestic song we heard was *Ringo no Uta*, with its hopeful verses and melody which was sung by people in Japan. It gave us strength to set ourselves to rebuild our devastated land. Yes, apples are very popular in Japan. I also don't know why Japanese officials raise unreasonable barriers to importing apples from America even though they favor "internationalization". I hope the day will soon come when apples in every nation become envoys of goodwill.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

**"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver."
(Proverbs 25:11)**

October 29 Message (Subject #318)

Although the Japanese Constitution, which was put into effect almost fifty years ago, has never been changed, an election of representatives was recently held under a new electoral system. As a result, there is a new alignment of political forces and a new government has been formed. Looking back on this election, what are your thoughts regarding the present state of democracy in Japan? What is your reaction to the results of the election? Are you happy with the new government and do you feel comfortable in regard to the direction Japan seems to be headed? Do you think changes are needed in election procedures, the government bureaucracy, the Constitution or the way the Constitution is interpreted or applied?

The general election for the House of Representatives was held the other day and the new strength of the respective political parties was decided. It was the first election held under a new election system in which there are candidates both for small electoral districts and for proportional representation. Before the adoption of this new system, representatives were chosen from medium-sized electoral districts. Under that system, more than two candidates belonging to the same party often competed with each other. As a result, so-called knowledgeable people insisted that policy differences were difficult to recognize. They insisted that the small electoral district system would encourage two large political parties, but the adoption of the new system did not achieve the hoped for result.

The greatest drawback was the great number of so-called "dead votes". There was no great difference in the number of votes for the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Frontier Party respectively, but this was not reflected in the number of representatives elected to the Diet. A slight difference in the popularity of parties can roll back the tide of election under the new system.

The next controversial point is the acceptance of double candidacy. A person can stand as a candidate in both the small electoral district and the proportional representation at the same time. Therefore, even if he is defeated in the former, he can gain a seat in the latter. A candidate whom the electorate rejected can be resurrected against the voters' will. Newspapers called such winners "zombi", which, according to a dictionary means "a corpse brought back to life by supernatural agency". I was favorably impressed with the aptness of this appellation.

Before the introduction of the new system, many people insisted that candidates were obliged to raise much money and that the new system would solve that problem because the electoral district is smaller, but the result was far less than their expectations.

Considering the various aspects noted above, I cannot say that the new system was successful. A readjustment of the new system has already been proposed, but it will be very difficult to revise it because it will be the new Diet members elected under the new system who will be responsible for its revision.

The turnout of voters this time was about sixty percent. It was nearly the lowest percentage since the end of the war. People's indifference toward politics is serious now. It is easy to say that people lack all sense of responsibility, but more than that, politicians should recognize that their lack of fixed principles has accelerated people's in-

difference. Mr. Hashimoto of the L. D. P. will be designated the Prime Minister early next month after much meandering. The most important mission for him is to regenerate trust in politics which is now lost. (MIKHIKO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

The other day, I viewed the debate between United States' candidates for president on television. I was envious of Americans because they can choose whom to vote for on the basis of those debates. The present state of Japan's democracy seems far behind that. Japan has been controlled by bureaucrats and politicians for about fifty years, since the closing of the general headquarters (GHQ) of the victorious allied countries. At present, I think many people feel that some changes are necessary in the political system to make this nation better.

To me, what politicians do in the Diet can be described as follows. They introduce a bill that has been prepared by bureaucrats, engage in discussions according to a schedule and pass it by a majority of votes. During the discussion, politicians of opposition parties have the right to speak, but they usually seem to be satisfied by simply delivering their remarks. The number of members of the ruling coalition parties is larger than that of the opposition parties, so it is quite clear that everything will proceed as scheduled.

I think politicians should give people more information. The lack of real debates keeps us uninformed. For example, when the law was passed to increase the consumption tax rate from three to five percent, important negotiations were carried on among ruling parties behind closed doors. So we still don't know what would be the result if it were not increased. They didn't indicate whether there was any alternative, either. They didn't explain why they decided on five percent. I think seven percent or more was mentioned and I wonder if they

thought they could pass the bill easier if a higher figure was publicized earlier.

During their election campaigns, politicians make too many promises. We are getting tired of hearing attractive promises which only last until the election. It is worse that we are getting used to seeing them break their promises. What they are doing is playing a political game. If they win one election, they then begin thinking how to win the next one, trying to do whatever is needed to maintain their positions. If they decide to do something for the future of the country, it must be good for all citizens, but as a matter of fact, they are usually concerned only about themselves or the people of their district.

What we need most in our political system are statesmen who seriously think of our future. Many people think atomic power plants are necessary and people don't oppose their construction if, though they are big, they are built far from their homes. The same is true in an election. Unfortunately, good things for Japan's future are not necessarily welcomed by the voters, if they are against their particular benefits.

Therefore, it is not only a problem of politicians, but also of voters. The late Mr. Michio Watanabe, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, once dared to say that politicians' qualities reflect their voters' qualities, when asked if he felt ashamed when his improprieties were pointed out. During the long feudal system in Japan, people got used to laws that came from the lord. Our democratic system also came from the lord, GHQ, along with the Constitution. This system was not introduced by the people's will. Therefore, it will take more time to change people's consciousness of being a member of a democratic society. When voters' way of thinking is changed, real democracy will be established in Japan.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

The Liberal Democratic Party won the general election held last September. I understand the Japanese people tend to prefer a conservative party to an extremely progressive party even though about half of them neglected to vote.

However, there are many political scandals relating to money. There seem to be more such cases recently than in past days. I believe strictness is necessary in the political world in particular. I am afraid many scandals occurring in the political world might be caused by the lack of self-confidence of the politicians themselves. It might be caused by their own immorality or their excessive concern for popularity. If that is so, none of them will be able to satisfy all people because that means that none of them has the necessary temperament required of a statesman in today's political world. It is to be hoped that they try to train themselves to be respectable statesmen at all times.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

Japan's general election is over! The fifty-nine percent turnout of voters was the lowest in history. Was it because of a distrustful administration? If that is the case—all are trustworthy politicians, it is unnecessary for citizens to vote. Accordingly, the turnout of voters decreases, doesn't it?

Who is making efforts to increase the turnout for elections? If it is private enterprises, that should have been examined long ago. The main cause for bewilderment at the recent election was in regard to the special system of double candidacy, that served as a safety measure, similar to students who sit for entrance examinations at several secondary schools or universities in Japan so they can enter one even if they fail at another. In the double candidacy system, it is said that a candidate can be returned even if he was defeated. That is strange and funny!

We saw many candidates who used certain tactics and a fail-safe strategy, utilizing the double candidacy system to their advantage but the constituent body was puzzled about how to select the best candidate. The loud voices from campaigning speakers had nothing interesting to say—only ear-splitting announcements of the candidate's name as the vehicle moved along. Although every political clique raised the issue of administrative reform, there was no clear vision for the 21st century.

Democracy requires responsible voters. If in the U. S. candidates acted in the way they do here, they would be beaten because of their disruption of quiet neighborhoods. In the U. S., local television stations broadcast discussions by candidates, even in local elections. PTAs hold get-togethers to listen to candidates' speeches, inviting all candidates. Newspapers daily report on topics related to candidates and their constituent bodies, according to William Andrew Torinen, who came to Japan from Seattle in the U. S. and is now serving at the International Exchange Institute in Ichinomiya City.

From the next election, they should revise the procedure and eliminate the double candidacy system. The most important role for the new assemblymen is to make a stable system of government which is suitable for the 21st century. Considering the present political situation, the most important matter which the politicians are overlooking is who protects Japan!

(JAIME IWAI, Owariasahi)

I would like to look at things from a long-range perspective. In the middle of the 19th century, some Japanese government leaders had a chance to see other civilized nations when they went to America and Europe for the first time. What astonished them most was that the foreign nations had democratic govern-

ments. Since then, Japan has made every effort to catch up with those Western models of civilization, including their democracy. In the course of development, however, the Japanese military became so obsessed with fanatic jingoism that they went so far as to lead the nation to defeat in World War II.

The defeat marked the birth of modern democracy in Japan. The Constitution promulgated in 1946 showed the main direction Japan should take. Half a century has passed without belligerent acts against any nation and Japan has enjoyed unprecedented affluence. Throughout that peaceful period, democracy was expected to take root, but what actually happened fell short of the expectation.

Consider the recent election for the House of Representatives conducted under a new system. It provided single-seat constituencies and a proportional representation system combined. The system was originally designed to the advantage of big parties and to the disadvantage of small parties. Eventually, after the event some candidates who lost a seat in the single seat constituency won a seat through the proportional representation system. Some people disdain such candidates. Some of them advocate revising the new election system. One of the problems of grave concern is that the result does not correctly reflect people's opinions about crucial issues of the times. The fact that the voter turnout was the lowest ever reveals that people are too wise to be at the beck and call of those politicians dubbed Nagata-cho residents who managed to make the new system with a fanfare under the pretext of so-called "political reform". In the last analysis, I would like to point out that we have to see to it that we can see fair play in the general election because the present system is far from just.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

Whenever an election of representatives is over, what concerns me is not only the results of the election but the voting rate. In this election, under the new electoral system in Japan, the voting rate was 59.7 percent, the lowest so far. Incidentally, the American general election this year also recorded its lowest voting rate (49 percent) since 1924.

Many Japanese people among those who did not join in the election say quite the same thing when asked the reason for their not having voted. "Whoever may be elected, it will make little difference." I feel very sorry to hear this kind of opinion. If every voter in Japan should think this way, democracy in this country would collapse and that would cause not a little difference but a big difference. We Japanese have become so accustomed to a peaceful society under our present democracy that we have taken the benefit of democracy for granted and even forgotten its importance.

Although I myself was born after democracy was introduced and have not experienced war, I feel very fearful when I think of war. The nation which does not permit people to say "No" and does not inform them of the truth easily takes them or their loved ones away to the battlefields. My father was forced to spend seven years of his youth in the army, having been dispatched to many places ranging from China to several islands off Australia. In a battle on Timor Island, 71 soldiers among the 206 in his company were killed and after fierce fighting on Guadalcanal Island, among the 99 soldiers in his company, only 21, including him, came back alive. The Battle of Guadalcanal became the first step in the defeat of Japan in that war. According to the statistics of the Defense Agency, of the 31,400 soldiers who landed there, 20,800 died, but about 15,000 died of starvation, malaria, malnutrition diarrhea, beriberi and debility, not as a result of actual combat. What a great

number of precious lives were vainly lost for the crazy nation!

I cannot read without tears the book my father has relating to the battle accounts there. It is a thick, heavy book, published 28 years after the war and took 8 years to compile by many veterans of each company in the infantry regiment he belonged to. It contains true records and facts about every battle they fought from 1939 to 1945. At the end of the book, one of the many writers, an ex-company commander, wrote: "Nothing is more cruel than war. We must not make a mistake like this again and we must try to realize a peaceful society. That is the duty of us survivors of the war and also our descendants."

I feel keenly that Japan's democracy is based on the sacrifice of many people's lives who were not allowed to say "No." A nation is like a living thing that can soon become mad without its citizen's good consideration and control. We must improve the condition of this strange creature with the cooperation of us all. Elections are the only way we can participate in, support and check our democracy. Before criticizing the present Japanese politicians, we should be conscientious voters, not criticizers, and do our best to avoid any more wars on the earth.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

November 5 Message (Subject#319)

In many ways, the United States is considered to be progressive, rational and innovative. But in at least one area, it appears to be conservative, irrational and backward. It is the only technologically advanced country in the world where the metric system is not in general use. Actually, the metric system is

the nation's official system, but it is generally ignored by most citizens, who prefer an old, complicated English system of miles, yards, feet and inches, gallons, quarts and pints, pounds and ounces. In Japan, the metric system is in general use, but such terms as ken, shaku, sun, tsubo, koku, shô and gô continue to be used at times, especially in certain areas. The metric system and the traditional measurement system is the suggested theme for an essay. What are the advantages of the former? Why is the latter still used in some cases? Do you ever use terms related to the old system? What thoughts or memories do you have related to these measurement systems?

In the 1930s, when I was an elementary school boy, people in general used the traditional system more than the new metric system. At school, our teacher told our class to convert *shaku*-related numbers into meter-related numbers and vice-versa as exercises in arithmetic. Then I was completely unaware that Japan joined other nations that adopted the new metric system as early as 1885. About half a century after that adoption of the new metric system, people still preferred the old system to the new one. Why? It is because the old system was based on the width of the human hand or foot or steps, while the new metric system was based on 1/40 millionth of the longitude of the globe. The latter is cold and distant because it is artificially made, while people are easily accustomed to the former due to their familiarity with it.

Brought up in the transition period from the traditional system to the new one, I know both the old and new systems. And yet, I am still inclined to rely on the old system when I want to

get a concrete idea of what the area of a given piece of land is. How many *tsubo* indicates the area to me more clearly than how many square meters.

Though the traditional system is dwindling as time passes, the two systems will go hand in hand for some time to come and we must put up with some inconveniences involved.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

It appears that the introduction of the metric system into Japan has been more successful compared to the situation in the United States. We use meters, liters and grams as units for measuring in our daily lives. However, when you look at fliers of real estate delivered with a newspaper, you immediately notice that we still stick to the traditional units of *tsubo* and *jô*. The former is the unit of land area and must be used with the equivalent in square meters according to the law. On the other hand, the figures in the latter unit is not associated with those in the metric system. *Jô* was originally used to express the number of *tatami*, or straw mats, and it has been used to indicate room space. According to the figures in *jô*, we can imagine the room size even when there are no mats in a Western style room. These days, the size of *tatami* has gotten smaller than before. Therefore, we are occasionally fooled and receive a false impression of the size of the room advertised in the fliers.

When I drove a car in the U. S. A., as speed limits were posted in miles per hour, such as 50, I didn't need to change this number into kilometers per hour. However, there were some cases that I wanted to change into the metric system in order to make comparisons. For example, when I wanted to know the gas mileage in kilometers per liter, it took me a while to change the unit from miles per gallon. The same was true in regard to engine size. It was hard for me to change

from cubic inches into cubic centimeters without a calculator. On television and in newspapers in the U. S. A., temperatures are reported only in Fahrenheit. Because of the complicated equation, I gave up changing them into Celsius and tried to get used to it. Now, I am not surprised to hear of the scorching 95-degree summer heat in Arizona.

In our laboratory here, we use an apparatus made in the U. S. A. with two pressure gauges, which show the inner pressure in pounds per square inch. So we always have to multiply the observed values by 0.07. For example, 50 pounds per square inch means 3.5 atoms, or kilograms per square centimeter. The unit of atom seems to be easier to recognize for me. Examples of American ways of measuring are not limited to scientific devices. We may see them on the shelves in stores. Many labels are printed in ounces (oz.), pounds (lb.) and quarts (qt.) on various foods from the U. S. As the containers are manufactured in keeping with the traditional system, the additional figures in milliliters or grams on the labels are always irregular. Though it is better than having no additions, it is inconvenient when you want to compare their prices with those of Japanese products.

I think that the persistence of a traditional measuring system is all right as long as it is used locally, such as *jō* here and "miles per hour" there. It will help to preserve and respect traditional culture. In some ways, the Japanese attitude toward accepting the metric system was too strict. The total ban on using traditional measuring devices made it difficult to get traditional products. Thus we can learn something from American ways of thinking toward their culture. We should not forget that we have lost a lot of cultural background since the adoption of the metric system. Cultural importance cannot be measured by the new convenient system.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

Civilizations came into existence in several places in the world separately without any connection between them. Languages, for example, began to be used almost spontaneously and independently in every area. Therefore, it is quite natural that they are different from each other. The same rule applies in the case of measurement systems.

The traditional measurement system of our country is the *shaku-kan-hō* (system). Our ancestors adopted *shaku* as a unit of length and *kan* as a unit of weight. They were introduced from China by way of Korea and were established by the *Taihō-ritsuryō* in 701. But there was no unified standard and there were differences, depending on the region, usage and period. This was especially so concerning *shaku*. It was the Meiji government that enacted the "Weight and Measures Law" and determined that 33 *shaku* was equal to 10 meters. Following its enactment, the *shaku-kan-hō* was used together with the metric system for about half a century until 1951 when the traditional units were generally abolished upon enactment of the "Measurement Law".

The "yard-pound system" is used mainly in Great Britain and the United States. Once there was a difference between them (imperial units and *avoirdupois* units), but they were unified in 1959. This system is authorized by law in the States along with the metric system. In keeping with internationalization, both countries have decided to proceed to the metric system and Great Britain, in particular, intends to replace pounds by kilograms by 1999.

In spite of the endeavors of all governments, it seems very difficult to change the consciousness of people who have become accustomed to the use of traditional measurement systems both in the East and the West. We find it very troublesome to use the duodecimals of the yard-pound system, but it does not

bother people using that system. The yard unit is still used in golf. Use of this unit is confusing to our brains because it is perhaps the only case for us Japanese to use the unit in our daily lives.

Attachment to the traditional system is also a problem for us. The *shaku-kan-hô* is deeply impressed in our minds. Our language would become poorer if we could not use such expressions as *issun no mushi nimo gobu no tamashii* (tread on a worm and it will turn), *go-shaku no inochi* (a man's life), *hyakkan-debu* (an extreme fatty), *ichiri-zuka* (a milepost) and so on. The unit which is most inseparable from our daily life is *tsubo*. *Tsubo* is the basic unit to measure land area. We usually use the expression "per 3.3 centiare" in land dealings, but everyone knows that such a conversion is quite purposeless for the promotion of the metric system. It is an outcome of necessity. Another peculiar unit is *monme*, which is used for the weighing of pearls. This traditional unit is also inseparable from the pearl business and is still used universally. This shows that pearls are our special product, even today.

Measurement systems are manifestations of a nation's culture. On the other hand, diverse systems are incompatible with internationalization. We should make efforts to solve this contradiction.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

In my childhood, in the 1930s, the metric system was introduced. Nowadays, that system is generally used in our daily lives, but I am still accustomed to using the following terms which are related to the old system: *tsubo*, *shaku*, *sun*, *ken*, *gô* and *shô*.

In Japanese houses located in urban as well as rural areas, *tatami* rooms are still popular. The size of a *tatami* is one *ken* x a half-*ken*. Two *tatami* form one *tsubo*. One *ken* equals six *shaku* and one *shaku* equals ten *sun*. Thus, the Japanese traditional measurement terms are re-

lated to *tatami*. I think those terms will not disappear as long as *tatami* survive.

On the other hand, *gô* and *shô* are measurement terms related to volume, mainly used for rice and saké. In liquor shops, we often see so-called one-*shô* bottles whereas paper packages are more popular these days. As in the case of *tatami*, I think the traditional terms, *gô* and *shô*, will not fade away as long as one-*shô* or one-*gô* bottles remain in shops and homes.

The old terms, *gô* and *shô*, remind me of the difficult food situation of my young days. During the war, we suffered from a shortage of daily necessities. In regard to food, we school boys and girls were supplied with only two *gô* and three *shaku* of rice per day. One *gô* equals ten *shaku*. (This *shaku* has a different *kanji* than the *shaku* related to length.) Two *gô* and three *shaku* correspond to 0.41 liter. Even though we ate some other supplementary foods, like vegetables, the quantity was very small. Thus, we were always hungry and always eager to eat whatever we could. It was miserable, but there was one benefit from that pitiful situation. We avoided the illnesses caused by the stomach-filling foods which characterize daily life today. This difficult but valuable experience makes me believe that "no food or too much food makes life shorter, while a little food makes people healthy."

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

When I was young, the old measurement system was still being used. We bought rice by the *shô* (=0.477 U. S. gallon) or *gô* (=0.381 U. S. pint) which was the Japanese measure of volume. Farmers also sold their rice products using the unit of *hyô* (bag, bale or sack) or *to* (=4.765 U. S. gallons).

In the art of making kimonos, *kujira jaku*, literally meaning a whale measurement, was used. *Kujira-jaku* is a measure of length used exclusively by Japa-

nese dressmakers. It is equal to 1.26 *shaku* (37.88 cm.) of the metal measure *shaku*, called *kane-jaku*. The origin of the word *kujira-jaku* is unknown, but it is certain that it was originally made of the barbel of a whale. Speaking of *kujira jaku*, I remember that Rokusuke Ei, a poet and television performer, once advocated organizing a campaign to promote the use of *kujira-jaku* in an attempt to defend traditional customs.

Tatami vary in size from place to place. *Kyôma*, literally meaning Kyoto measure, has the largest dimensions for a room, measuring 6.5 *shaku* (197 cm.) between pillars, whereas *inakama*, now the most prevalent room-size, measure 6.0 *shaku* (182 cm.) between pillars.

Japan replaced the old measurement system with the metric system after World War II simultaneously throughout the country. But, as you can easily imagine, it was not an easy task, not only for the elderly but for young people also, to abandon the old system and adopt a new one. On the other hand, the United States of America, which has led the world in many fields, is neglecting to adopt the metric system and clings to the old measurement system with its pounds, gallons, inches and miles. I wonder why Americans cling to the old measurement system so tenaciously. Is America such a *laissez-faire* country that people can choose any measurement according to their own preference?

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

The word "measurement" brings the name *Amitabha Buddha* to my mind. It is the Sanskrit name of the Buddha that is known as *Amidabutsu* in Japan. The literal meaning of *Amitabha* is unmeasured (*a-mita*) light (*abha*). Etymologically, the word *mita* is derived from the verb *mi*, which shares the same root as the English words "measure" and "meter". Both English and Sanskrit belong to the Indo-European family of languages. He is

the Buddha (the Enlightened One) who resides in the Western Paradise which is filled with unmeasurably brilliant light. It is the world of perfect peace and happiness without any sorrow or sadness. Devout Buddhists chant his name and meditate on the Western Paradise where they eagerly hope to be born in the next life. It is also called *Gokuraku-Jôdô* (the pure land of extreme happiness). *Jôdô Shinshû*, one of the largest Buddhist sects in Japan, emphasizes that paradise is only attainable through the great mercy of *Amitabha Buddha*, not by their own effort. Any deliberate religious ceremony, severe ascetic practice or philosophical study is not enough to realize their hope to be born there.

I feel in this material world we cannot free ourselves from the fetter of "measurement". One's wealth is measured by the amount of one's bank account or the size of one's house. A student's ability is measured by test scores. The importance of a worker is measured by the salary. Even when we die, mourners who attend the funeral ceremony count the number of priests and talk about how the ceremony was magnificent. Could that be considered a yardstick of the success of the deceased's life? Indeed, this world is filled with stress and anxiety because the value of one's life is decided by many kinds of measures. How far our world is from *Amitabha Buddha's* paradise!

(HARUKI TANAKA, Owariasahi)

Do you know what the longest English word is? This is one of the quizzes I sometimes give my students to relieve their tiredness. The answer is "smiles". This word is much longer than any other English word because there is a "mile" between the first and last s. Sometimes a few students give me the correct answer, having heard that quiz before, but most of them do not know how long a mile is.

— Long ago, one of my acquaintances, who had spent seven years in Texas because of her husband's work, said to me, "During our stay in the States, we sometimes enjoyed driving a car at the speed of 100 miles an hour". "Oh, 100 miles an hour", I nodded. Expressing it in terms of kilometers, I was greatly surprised. "That's 160 kilometers an hour!" Here in Japan, there are no roads on which we can enjoy driving at such a speed. It was at that time that I realized that one mile equals 1609 meters. Of course, we had to take the different circumstances into consideration. In the U. S., they could drive seeing only the horizon and the cotton fields in the South.

In those days, a folk song titled "500 Miles" was very popular in the States. Many young Japanese hearts also were attracted by both the melody and the words. But if the title had been "500 Kilometers", it would not have fit well with the lyrics and slow tempo of that song. The sound of the word "mile" is much softer and similar to the Japanese word *mairu*, a humble form of "go". "Mile has the meaning of a distance of 1000 steps, considering the steps of the right and left foot as one step. Like this word, other traditional units of measurement in both English and Japanese are derived from terms related to parts of the body or things used in daily life.

If Americans prefer an old, complicated measurement system in spite of having an easier system, they probably feel something more than rationality in the traditional troublesome system. To insist on thorough rationalization is sure to face a crisis some day. Living in an extremely advanced, progressive, innovative, rational and perfect society will suffocate us as we are neither computers nor robots. To have some irrational areas in our lives may be very important to make us feel at home because we are creatures with an irrational nature.
(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

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/>

January 19, 1997 = message #5596; Weekly copy #780; "Daily Word" Echoes #55; Listeners Meeting #65; Total number of calls (9/80-12/96)=782,729; Average per day: 131; Record number of calls in one day: 5224 (1/14/88)