

"Daily Word" Echoes

P.O Box 30, Moriyama Post Office, Nagoya 463 Tel. (052)794-6422

November 30, 1997

Number 58

¥200

(Essays submitted by listeners/readers on themes of "Daily Word" messages between September 2 and October 7, 1997. Corrected and edited by Clark Offner.)

September 2 Message (Theme #332)

One result of Japanese society becoming more democratic may be seen in a subtle change in language used by young people in particular. For better or for worse, many young people are not using the polite forms of words or are using them incorrectly. It is also said that sales people often use excessively polite forms when speaking to a customer in order to secure a sale. This may be good for business, but it is a misuse of traditional language. Now, a panel of fifteen experts is studying the present situation related to polite language and will report to the prime minister this fall. Some educators advise discarding polite or humble language forms altogether. What do you think about this problem? Do you think polite forms should be continued in the future? Will they be continued? Why are young people not using such forms correctly? Is your use of polite language different from that of your parents? from that of youth today? What do you consider the pros and cons of polite language forms?

It is often said that the polite forms of words are used incorrectly among young people in particular, but it may be better to say that polite forms of lan-

guage are becoming obsolete. However, if such trends continue they will lead to the loss of a characteristic feature of Japanese.

The Japanese language has a structure capable of expressing who did some action or who is being talked about by the use of honorific expressions, even if we omit the subject. So, if we do not use the terms of respect, it is necessary for us to mention the subject clearly. For example, *okaeri nasaimashita* suggests one's senior or superior has come back, even though no subject is specified.

I presume that *keigo*, or "terms of respect" are a vestige of the age of feudalism when people were classified into four categories: *samurai*, farmers, artisans and merchants. In those days, people were very careful in choosing their words when addressing magistrates or government officials.

I think the most difficult part of Japanese is related to the usage of honorific expressions, including humble words and polite words. It is in regard to these terms of respect that foreigners often make mistakes. If they are used properly, I think there is no language that can equal Japanese in facilitating smooth human relations.

We do not need to use polite forms excessively, but interweaving the ordinary style of speaking with polite forms is the essence of Japanese. "Japanese without polite forms" will be dry, dull and uninteresting just as "sushi without wasabi, or horseradish". I believe "po-

lite forms of words" make Japanese what it is. (**SHOJI DOMAE**, Kasugai)

I presume it is difficult for foreigners to learn the Japanese language which have words with the same meaning but are more or less polite. Elderly Japanese can use them correctly. In my thinking, polite language is important in our relationships. Recently, I feel that the language of young people is disorderly. They use simple, easy words, including *a*, *un*, etc. It saves time to use short words, but they do not express their thoughts.

Next, I wish to emphasize that young people should have better manners. They do not even say such short words as *arigatô* or *sumimasen*. I consider this to be the main problem in Japan. Words have meaning which express our minds and we Japanese should hold on to such words.

(**MICHIKO SANDO**, Minami, Nagoya)

Terms of respect (*keigo*) are peculiar to the Japanese language, but even Japanese sometimes cannot use them properly. In recent years, there are many Japanese who cannot speak Japanese correctly, whether they are old or young. When I was a little girl, my mother taught me how to use terms of respect and told me not to use vulgar words. I also learned to use the respectful terms at school.

As far as I know, today's parents do not teach their children how to speak Japanese correctly. The Japanese language spoken by junior or senior high school students proves that. I think language should be taught at home.

Besides, there is another indication of how the Japanese language has become corrupted. Some people make Japanese impolite under the guise of politeness. Originally, we do not put an honorific "o" on such words as "beer", "fire" and so on. However, a certain cooking teacher says *Ohi o tsukeru*, and I have heard some ladies say, *Obi-ru o kudasai*.

I think that not only studies to note the deviations, but studies related to how to speak the Japanese language correctly are required.

(**HIROMI FURUTA**, Kita, Nagoya)

My wife is a lecturer at Chûnichi Culture Center on *Hanashikata* (the Art of Speech and Conversation) and *Rôdoku* (Recitation). (Incidentally, recently she has written a book entitled *Hanashikata Kyôshitsu*, the result of years of research.) According to her, one of the most notable trends in the disorderly speech of young people is seen in their use of polite language forms. This trend should not be attributed to our democratization after the war, I think, but is the result of young people's laziness in regard to the study of our traditional language. In other words, they are lacking the spirit of *ai-go*, or cherishing words.

In our language, we have three kinds of honorific forms: *sonkei-go* (respectful words), *kenjô-go* (humble words) and *teinei-go* (polite words). The first group expresses the speakers' respect for the listeners or the subjects involved. The second group humbly expresses something concerning oneself. And the third expresses politeness mainly by using different words. Examples are as follows: 1) Respectful words = *kuu*, *nomu*-->*agaru*, *suru*-->*nasaru*, *iu*-->*ossharu*, *kaku*-->*kakareru*; 2) Humble Words = *yarû*-->*ageru*, *suru*-->*itasu*, *morau*-->*itadaku*, *au*-->*omenikakaru*; 3) Polite Words = *aru*-->*gozaimasu*, *da*-->*desu*, *yomu*-->*yomimasu*, *benjo*-->*otearai*.

Some of these honorific words have more than two forms according to the degree of respect, modesty or politeness. For example: *suru*--*sareru*--*nasaru*--*asobasu*, *kuru*--*korareru*--*irassharu* (respect), *yarû*--*ageru*--*sashiageru*, *iu*--*môsu*--*môshiageru* (humble), *da*--*desu*--*degozaimasu* (polite).

It is very difficult, even for us Japanese, to distinguish these three cate-

gories of honorific words. The most common mistakes are related to the confusion of respectful words and humble words. We often hear speeches in the Diet which include such expressions as *tadaima daijin ga môshiageta yôni* . . . This expression is not correct, because *môsu* should not be used as a respectful term for another's speech. Another intolerable example of misusing words is an excessive use of "o" as a prefix. *O-bîru*, *o-kôhi* are permissible, I think, but I cannot admit that *o-juken*, *o-tenpura* are correct expressions.

To use polite language forms is surely difficult. It can readily be imagined that foreign students of Japanese will find it very difficult to remember them correctly. I no longer expect young people today to have a good command of them. Rather, I wish to point out other kinds of disorderly language among young people at present: strange accents on the ending of words, question-like intonations in affirmative sentences, an excessive use of adopted words and so on. We would do well to follow the French people's obstinate attitude to preserve their own language.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I am in favor of the continued use of polite forms of words in the future. I am against the advice of some educators that polite or humble language forms should be discarded altogether. If that were so, our society would become very miserable because such expressions of politeness, gratitude and respect are indispensable to a wholesome social order. Real respect will be expressed by external forms first of all. External forms, such as deeds, looks and attitudes are very important. No feeling of internal politeness can be experienced without an external expression of politeness.

Conversely, if someone uses polite words when he actually does not respect others, his deceitful heart will be re-

vealed in a short time. If I encountered such a person, I would intentionally use impolite words when speaking to him because I can easily judge what he is really thinking. On the other hand, when someone impolitely criticizes others, pretending to show his frankness however, I would rather sympathize with those he criticizes. Frankness and impoliteness are basically different.

When we are watching television, we sometimes come across a scene in which men use extremely impolite, rude words. In such a case, I soon turn that channel off. The fact that such programs are allowed to be broadcast, must be considered a very serious social problem.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

I think it is very difficult to speak polite Japanese in a suitable way because its usage depends on the situation. I cannot be the judge of whether it is right or wrong but many young people speak Japanese in a different way than I do. For example, I don't say *dekai* to mean "huge". I think this word used to be spoken only by males in casual conversations. People of the younger generation now use it as if it just means "very big". Still, I don't like to hear young ladies say that word. I also don't say *mukatsuku* to mean I am angry. I use this word with a different accent when I am sick. These two words contain an implication that makes me hesitate to use them.

I have also noticed that many young people speak in a similar way regardless of their sex. There used to be a distinct difference between the Japanese spoken by men and women. I think the tendency for young men and women to speak in a similar way is quite natural if we consider it the result of a democratic education for more than fifty years. But some people seem to have misunderstood the meaning of equality in a democratic society. I am sorry to see that some people seem to have lost their respect

toward others,--especially toward elderly people. This is a problem which precedes their ability to speak in a polite way because it is related to their basic attitude toward others. Many aged people are offended by the malicious words of young people toward them. Such words are often seen in letters to newspapers. Our society is surely losing one of the great emphases of Confucianism.

We should not blame this trend only on schools. Children learn how to speak at home before they enter school. Many children don't have the chance to learn how to respect elderly people at home, because their grandparents live separately. Therefore, it is very important for parents to teach their children how to speak polite Japanese and how to respect the aged, especially when they are very young.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

Itadakimasu is an expression we Japanese use before starting to eat meals. *Itadaku* is one of the modest words in Japanese. If it were not for this expression, we would have to say *tabemasu* instead, but *taberu* can mean only the act of eating. When we say *itadakimasu* before each meal, it connotes our thankfulness to many people who have been involved in growing or preparing the food on the table for us to eat. Using the polite or humble words enables us to express such inner feelings as respect, gratitude, affection, pleasure, sympathy and modesty much better than if we communicated without them. And that is one of the important roles of languages as well as conveying the literal meanings of words or sentences.

I do not care if young people are not using polite forms incorrectly, because when I was young, I also could not use them correctly. Different from former days, children do not use polite forms when speaking to their parents at home, nor to their teachers at school. So it is

quite natural for them not to be accustomed to using polite forms correctly. But as they grow older, they will gradually learn how to use those polite forms in practice through various relationships with many people. When they enter society, they are sure to come to learn that the people in higher positions in a company and customers or clients as well as elderly, experienced people are those to whom they should be very careful to use polite forms, not only from the viewpoint of common sense but out of necessity because they do not want to fail in their work or career. At that stage, their attention may be focused on grammatical accuracy of the polite forms they use or whether or not their usage of honorific words is proper to the situation.

As young people get older, and gain more experience, they will realize how important ordinary people around them are, regardless of age, experience intelligence, work or social status. They will feel like using polite forms quite naturally to those people without any special instruction. That is the time they will really understand the true significance of polite and modest words and can feel invisible help or support from them when they say *itadakimasu* before each meal. (KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

It is natural that words change as time passes. For example, in the movie, *Tokyo Monogatari* by Director Ozu, which depicts a typical middle-class Japanese family before World War II, the words used in the home are very, very different from those used in our homes now. They are excessively polite words. I think that shows how great fathers' prestige was in homes at that time.

In regard to words used in companies, I do not find a big difference between the present time and previously. I can say, however, that words used in schools by students to their teachers have become much worse. It may imply

friendliness but I am afraid it also indicates a lack of respect.

As the democratization of society develops, polite or modest words seem to be used less and less. Equality among people is important, but it is also necessary that everyone shows respect to others and use proper, polite words. And it is useful to maintain one aspect of Japanese culture, I think.

(YOSHIKO TOYOTA, Kanie, Aichi)

Some educators are said to advise discarding polite or humble language forms altogether. I would like to voice an objection to their proposal. I do not understand what makes them consider such an outrageous idea.

I recommend that polite language forms be preserved for I believe that such forms perform an important lubricating function in social life. People are prone to become rude without the polite language forms. You cannot keep polite company if you neglect polite words.

It cannot be denied that polite language forms come from the so-called vertical human relations of the old times. This fact does not mean, however, that polite forms are unsuitable to modern times. Good traditions should be preserved. It is only because the polite language forms have performed some indispensable functions in society that they have continued through the ages.

Generally speaking, people at large are using polite language forms less often than before. Especially, young people are less careful in using correct forms because they are not so concerned about them. Some say times have changed, but I do not completely agree with them. Some indescribable tendency seems responsible for the trend. No one can reverse the trend. This is the way times change, isn't it?

It is a misconception that polite language forms do not fit in with a democratic society because that society's

human relationships are horizontal rather than vertical.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

"Language is a dress of thought." I learned this tasteful saying from "Daily Word". As we change our dress from time to time, so the words we speak must be changed occasionally. It was quite natural for us to speak politely when we spoke to the elderly. That is what we were taught from our childhood and put into practice as a matter of course.

France is not exceptional, but all nations are proud of their own languages. I believe that Japanese is a beautiful language when it is either written or spoken. Nowadays, however, the disorderly way of speaking of the younger generation is often pointed out. I think this is a temporary phenomenon. As a part of their growing up, it seems to me they are having fun speaking in such a way but when they get home and speak to their parents, they do not speak as they do to their friends (I hope).

Only human beings have language as a means of communication, so a beautiful language should be handed down to the next generation.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

September 9 Message (Theme #333)

On September 9, 1850, 147 years ago today, the state of California was officially admitted to the United States of America as the 31st state. Named after an imaginary island (an "earthly paradise") in an old Spanish romance, it is the third largest state, a little larger than Japan. What does the name "California" bring to your mind? You may have visited there or know some famous cities, people, events or natural wonders

related to that state. California is one theme for those who wish to write a short essay for me to correct and print in "Daily Word" Echoes. The second suggestion is related to another event that took place on this day in 1776, when the Continental Congress ruled that "United States" should replace "United Colonies" as the name of the new nation. As a result, we U. S. citizens do not have an appropriate designation for ourselves, for the term "Americans" may actually include citizens of 35 countries on the American continents. At the present time what does the name "United States of America" bring to your mind? I would be interested in reading your frank impressions, memories or opinions on either of these themes.

In 1974, I had a wonderful opportunity to go to the United States of America and make a short visit to California. At that time, Nagoya Broadcasting Network (NBN) and the University of Utah had an exchange program for students enrolled in any college or university in Aichi, Mie and Gifu prefectures. I applied and was accepted as one of the twelve students.

Since I am a high school English teacher, you may think I was majoring in English literature or something like that but I was not. I was in the department of Business Administration and one of my favorite subjects was marketing. My teacher was Professor Nonaka, who is now a professor at Hitotsubashi University. He was so happy that I was selected for the NBN program that he introduced me to one of his former classmates at the University of California at Berkeley. I cannot remember his name, but I recall that he was a tall man with a mustache. As I went through customs at the San Francisco Airport, I was extremely happy to see him holding a large

piece of paper on which were the words: "Mr. Kimura, Welcome to the U. S. A." He first drove me to the Golden Gate Bridge, then to Fisherman's Wharf, where we had lunch. and then rode on a cable car.

One of the most interesting experiences I had in San Francisco was when I ordered a salad at a restaurant. Since I could not recognize any food on the menu I ordered what looked "delicious" only by its name. I asked my teacher's friend how it would taste and he replied "Good", so I ordered it. To my surprise, however, what was served to me was much lettuce and a few other vegetables in a big bowl. It was a large amount, but it could not fill my empty stomach.

After a one-day stay in San Francisco, we students flew on to Salt Lake City, where we enrolled as "temporary students" at the University of Utah for three weeks. Then we travelled across the northern and eastern parts of the state and then back to California. It was at that time that I went to Disneyland for the first time. Everything was so exciting that I felt it was a real amusement park even adults could enjoy. The things and buildings I saw and the people I met during this first trip abroad were all so good that I did not have even one negative impression of the U. S. or California and I still have some contact with some of the people who helped me with this trip through NBN.

I have met many Americans at home and abroad and the image of Americans I have gained through these people is this: cheerful and positive. That it probably because most of the Americans I have met are Christians. Whatever may occur, they look calm and have enough energy to try to make the situation change for the better by taking advantage of what is available. Dr. Offner and his wife have also given my wife and me a good example we would like to follow.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

My first contact with the U. S. A. was observing B29 bombers from an air-raid shelter of our school in Hiroshima and the second was encountering American occupation troops at a street corner of the city. Soon after that, many American movies began to be shown in our country and we could get a peep at American culture and people's life there. In a documentary film on the Olympic Games (at Berlin, maybe, when Owens set a new world record), I saw the letters USA on some players uniforms, but I did not know the meaning and wondered about it. It brought to my mind the name of a place in Kyushu. Looking at some love story films, I was deeply impressed by the fact that such films had been produced during the war.

It was in 1977 that I visited America for the first time. My main purpose was to attend the International Trade Fair in Dallas, Texas. I visited various parts of the country by myself before I met with other members of the group in Dallas. When I boarded a domestic plane for Chicago at Los Angeles, I was confused by the rapid speech in the announcements. I was moved with admiration at the sight of the broad expanse of ground without end. Once, when a stewardess passed by me, she stuck a label on which was printed "occupied" on my bald head for fun and then laughed uproariously. I was surprised at her innocent joke, which we could never imagine happening in our country. In Chicago, I visited Lake Michigan and wondered at the beauty of the lakeside.

In Dallas, I attended the International Trade Fair at the World Trade Center with our governor and received a nomination to become an honorary citizen of that city. I had much difficulty understanding the language spoken there, especially that spoken by the general public. I had thought that my words would be understood by others, even though I could not understand theirs, but I was

completely mistaken. No matter how clearly I tried to pronounce "World Trade Center", my destination, it took much time to make a taxi driver understand what I said. Anyway, I was able to find great pleasure and many surprises on my first visit to the U. S. A., and gained a favorable impression of that country.

Each of my family members has had some relationship with the U. S. A. My daughter had a chance to study at Harvard University for two years, being sent by the government. She stayed in Boston during that time and was able to observe American society and culture in addition to her major field of study. When her graduation ceremony was held, my wife visited Boston and attended the ceremony in a kimono. When they walked together along the street of the city, many people called out "Congratulations" to them, which my wife recounts excitedly even now. My wife stayed at the lodging house for some time and even now continues to correspond with the owner. My son also experienced studying in a college in California and often writes treatises on American society. I think America has some kind of charm, which makes me desire mutual friendship between our two countries in the future.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I have visited California. It is a place with a nice environment, warm hearts, sweet fruits and so on. But I will write about another kind of "California". This word brings oranges to my mind.

California oranges are famous now, but I first heard this word when I was a child. My mother said one day, "California oranges are sweet. I found and bought these." We ate some of them and they were very sweet. I wonder how my mother knew that name at that time. I presume it was because she was young during the Taishô period, which was much freer than Shôwa. I was sometimes surprised to hear her talking to my aunt

about when she was in high school and college. In Japanese, we have the expression, *Taishō modan*. They had a much freer youth than I can imagine. The atmosphere in my youth was a step backward.

My experience tells me that happy memories or progress will be born in a time of peace. I recall my mother's face in relation to the word "California".

(MICHIKO SANO, Minami, Nagoya)

When I listened to the telephone message of September 9, I learned for the first time that California was named after an imaginary island (an "earthly paradise") in an old Spanish romance. Since my childhood, the word "California" stimulated an image of an earthly paradise, filled with beautiful flowers, young trees with green leaves, many singing birds and an abundance of rich fruits. Now that I was informed about the origination of its name, I can easily understand why I had such an image of California. I have often heard that the state of California is a little larger than Japan, but I could not immediately believe it because I have never been there. However, I can easily imagine how rich and romantic the land of California is.

Contrary to my imagination about that beautiful land, however, I heard that there were many Japanese immigrants of prewar days who endured very difficult experiences when they were forced to move to a relocation center in a mountainous area during the war. And to relate a personal experience, in the latter part of the 1980s, a client of my company who was a successful Nisei merchant from Japan hired some American employees in San Francisco and suddenly failed in his business due to the severe competition there. I was deeply impressed with the severity of the actual lives of human beings even in the midst of such a peaceful and romantic natural environment.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

The word "America" used to be associated in my mind with a country of freedom and the "American dream". I had thought that those who worked hard in America would surely succeed. When I told this to an American friend living in Colorado several years ago, he said to me: "While I was working at an oil company, I was quick at learning and I was a valuable person. My colleague knew that and exerted his influence against me to keep me from getting a promotion, so I was sent to the warehouse." I wonder why his boss didn't give him an opportunity to gain a promotion earlier.

Also, when I visited a Philippine acquaintance living in Glendale, California a few years ago, his Philippine friend said to me: "Oriental people are discriminated against." He was working at a hotel in those days. According to what he said, it seems that he did not have much of a chance to get a promotion.

Furthermore, a Japanese actor working in Hollywood, named Sho Kosugi, said on a television program: "One of the most popular white American actors told me that as I belonged to the yellow race, I would not be able to succeed in America." Thus, my positive images of America were destroyed.

(HIROMI FURUTA, Kita, Nagoya)

It has been more than ten years since I came back to Japan from Columbus, Ohio. I stayed there for two years as a postdoctoral researcher at Ohio State University. During our stay, I had a variety of experiences unrelated to my academic work. Above all, our long drives are very exciting memories. We were able to visit more than twenty national parks and national monuments. I will write about how I drove there.

Because our residence was located in the Midwestern plain, I sometimes longed to see mountains. One day in late August of 1986, I finally decided to drive across the continent by car and take my

family to the national parks in the Rocky Mountains. It took us three days to get to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming via Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and South Dakota. We stayed there for several days and enjoyed beautiful scenery and wild animals. I had never been to Grand Teton National Park, just south of Yellowstone, but the shape of the Teton mountains looked familiar. Later, I realized that they are the mountains viewed at the end of the old movie *Shane*. A winding river, named Snake River, runs through the park. We saw an osprey dive into the river and fly away holding a big fish. It was an unforgettable moment for us.

Then we headed north, traveled through Glacier, Montana, crossed the Border and went into the Canadian Rockies. After a few days of experiencing the rather cold weather for September, we wanted to enjoy the summer sunshine again, so we went down to the desert in Utah by way of Montana and Idaho. Afterward, we crossed the Great Divide at Loveland Pass (11,992 feet above sea level) in Colorado. Along the mountain road, we saw bright yellow aspen leaves under the blue sky. I drove more than 800 miles in one day heading back to Ohio. Interstate 70 in Kansas was so straight that the morning sun shone in front of us, and in the evening, I could see the sun setting in the rearview mirror. We cannot find such a road in Japan. I think driving is the best way to feel the size of the continent.

We also went to the East Coast and then down to Key West, Florida during the Christmas holidays. On our way back to Japan, we crossed the continent once again by car, going to Washington by way of Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California and Oregon. I am very sorry that I cannot write how we enjoyed these long drives in the limited space here.

Some people say that driving on Interstate highways is boring because the

scenery doesn't change so often, but it is fun for me to drive a car for a long time without bothering about traffic lights. I understand that freeways are not only free of charge but also free from traffic lights. The most wonderful thing about driving in the U. S. is that you can go to any state except Hawaii by car. Our long distance drives were enhanced by handy motels and low-priced gas. It is no wonder that many American families enjoy driving camping cars from coast to coast.

I would like to encourage more Japanese to enjoy driving on Interstate highways and visiting the countryside in the U. S. They will surely see wonderful sights that they cannot find through package tours. We don't have to be content with driving on expensive and often jammed highways in Japan.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

"Melting pot" was a term repeatedly used by professors to symbolize the U. S. A. when I was studying American history in university. Actually, America is composed of many races with various cultural, religious, political and economic backgrounds. Different from us lazy students, young professors were very eager and active in studying about America. They suggested that America was a kind of miniature of the world and that if the complex American society fared well, that could engender hope of a peaceful world. Studying America might provide hints to make our world better, considering the many difficult problems both the world and the U. S. A. were facing.

But in those days, superpower America was in the midst of the Vietnam War, suffering great harm, which resulted in the loss of a dream or expectation many people in other countries had held of America. It is said that the American frontier spirit which had developed through the reclamation of the West did not disappear with the end of the "Frontier Line" of California in 1898, but con-

tinued to extend even over the Pacific Ocean to other countries.

During my 40-day trip to the U. S. A. 15 years ago, I visited Plymouth, Massachusetts where the *Mayflower* arrived in 1620. Many seagulls were flying low over the quiet ocean and I got a very harsh impression viewing the coast where 102 Pilgrims landed. I could not help thinking of the great hardships they experienced in that new world. That was the very beginning of the American frontier spirit that has been evident in its relationships many other nations with its superpower responsibilities. I was also impressed by the Statue of Liberty, not because of its height but because of its posture. It stares far out over the Atlantic Ocean toward many other countries, not toward the U. S. A. I think this shows very clearly the character of the United States—broadminded and tolerant. Of course, now it is impossible for the U. S. to accept immigrants as it used to, but the spirit of acceptance regardless of nationality or race has continued to be seen in various areas of American society. あれども

While America has many difficult problems, it has even more advantages, I think. Learning much from America, but not becoming overly dependent on it, we should try to cooperate in making every effort to build a peaceful and beautiful world.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

Recently, I had a chance to visit Okinawa and was stimulated to think about the relationship between Japan and America. In the Pacific War, it was only in Okinawa that ground battles were fought on Japanese land between the Japanese Imperial Army and the Allied Forces led by the United States. Even now, a very large amount of land is occupied by the U. S. forces.

The first place we visited related to that war was the *Himeyuri-no-Tô*, Tower

of the Wild Scarlet Lily, located on Mabuni Hill, which is well-known as the site where two hundred female students were killed by gas bombs thrown by U. S. Marines. The cave where they hid and lost their lives remains. In the Memorial Building which stands nearby, the student victim's photos were displayed on the wall and various kinds of articles and belongings left by the deceased were exhibited. It was such an impressive sight that a middle-aged man was sobbing in that room.

The place we visited last was an underground tunnel which was used as the headquarters for the Japanese Navy. The Japanese defending troops could not hold out against the overwhelmingly superior Allied Forces. This battle which lasted for three months claimed 200,000 Japanese lives, including both soldiers and civilians, while 12,500 Allied Forces' men died. This indicates how fierce this battle was.

After the war ended, the Occupation Forces, which were commanded by U. S. General MacArthur, carried out various reforms, such as demilitarization, dissolution of conglomerates (*zaibatsu kaitai*), liberation of farmland, reformation of the education system, and so forth. As a result, Japan was able to recover after going through a time of great economic hardship in the following years. Before Japan was able to stand up on its own feet from its completely shattered condition, America extended a helping hand. For that reason, we owe America a great deal and are deeply grateful to the United States for what we are now.

On the other hand, however, it is true that we are influenced negatively by such trends as the "Women's Liberation Movement" in America. That is contrary to the traditional way of thinking in the Orient, i. e., male chauvinism. After the war, this women's liberation tide washed ashore onto the Japanese archipelago from the other side of the Pacific.

ic. As a result, male chauvinism has waned and women grasped predominant power over men, as is often noted, "women and stockings have become stronger after the war."

As we have seen, the United States played a leading role in the restoration of Japan after the war. Now, as members of a group of developed countries, Japan and America have to be cooperative in many ways and try to contribute to the development and welfare of the whole world. (SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

I have only one Rand McNally road map. It is of California, even though I cannot drive a car. In 1987, I made a trip with nine others by a rented car, mainly in California, but also going into Arizona and Nevada. We stayed at motels in each city, without reservations, except for the first and last ones. Starting from Los Angeles, we visited Long Beach, Sequoia National Park, Fresno, San Francisco, Monterey, Carmel, Santa Barbara, Williams and Las Vegas.

When I close my eyes, various memories come to mind: the deep blue sky, old giant sequoia trees over 2000 years old, the horizon seen from the California Route No.1 Sea Way (to me, it seemed curved like the round earth), strange double rainbows following an enormous shower in the Mojave Desert, fruit car trains along the roadside from which we often bought various kinds of fruit, the magnificence of nature at the Grand Canyon, etc. Some day I would like to visit there again and have more opportunities to talk with Californians.

(YOSHIKO TOYOTA, Kanie, Aichi)

First, I would like to share a war-time memory. One fine day during World War II, more than half a century ago, several B-29 plans making a flight in formation high in the azure sky happened to catch my eye. In an instant, I was totally absorbed in admiration looking up

at those state-of-the-art aircraft shining brightly in the sky. I completely forgot they were the very aircraft that had dropped devastating incendiary bombs on my hometown a short time before. The planes looked majestic. There was no possibility of their being shot down by a barrage of shells, for the Japanese army's defensive artillery fell short of the public expectation that they would shoot down the abominable enemy planes.

The second anecdote I wish to share is this. A private English school was opened just after the end of the Pacific War. An American military officer of the Occupation Forces was our teacher. His gentlemanly demeanor as well as his dignified, disciplined appearance impressed me so deeply that I came to have great respect for him. Happy memories of the handsome officer still remain vivid after so many years.

The name, U. S. A., stimulates in my mind a vague image of how it looks. Vastness, abundance, variety and democracy are the main concepts. On the whole, it makes me feel at ease, except for its belligerency against some countries.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

Los Angeles and San Francisco are the places I visited in the state of California. Three years ago, I visited there for the first time as a member of a friendship mission from Nagoya to celebrate the 35th anniversary of our sister city relationship with Los Angeles. It was right after some terrible violence had taken place. I saw a number of broken-down homes, especially in the residential areas where Koreans and Chinese lived. Many homeless persons were sitting along the road even in daytime. We were told not to walk around alone. Thus my impression was not favorable. Afterward, however, I realized that that was only one of the faces of that big city.

During my short stay, I met many nice people who participated in various

events, such as the second generation festival parade and reception. The highlight of the official events was a big party which was attended by the mayors of both cities: Nagoya and Los Angeles.

Following all the official events, we had an exciting time, visiting amusement areas. Disneyland, Universal Studios in Hollywood, the Chinese Theater and Marina Del Ray are places that vividly come to my mind. Last summer, on my way to Mexico, I stayed overnight in Los Angeles and again visited Marina Del Ray for dinner. While we were having dinner in a restaurant by the seashore, we saw a beautiful sunset.

In Los Angeles, there is an association called LANSCA, which stands for Los Angeles and Nagoya Sister City Affiliation. Mr. and Ms. Houser used to be the chairpersons for that society. We meet each other once a year and they are now visiting Nagoya for the Nagoya Festival. This coming Sunday, I am looking forward to joining them on a trip to Kyoto.

Finally, have you ever heard of a "Saturday Night Special"? It is not a night of an enjoyable weekend. It is the name of a cheap gun, costing around \$60 and mainly produced in the state of California, maybe in Los Angeles. I have heard that whether or not to continue producing the guns is becoming a major issue for the state government.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

September 16 Message (Theme #334)

T is the 20th letter of the modern English alphabet. A "tee", spelled t-e-e, is a small peg on which a golf ball is placed before hitting it. Another kind of "tea", spelled t-e-a, denotes a certain kind of evergreen bush, the dried leaves of that bush and the beverage made from

putting those tea leaves into boiling water. The Japanese term for these things is cha, but when speaking of the beverage, it is usually preceded by an honorific prefix. There are various kinds of ocha, depending on the plant itself, when the leaves are picked and how they are prepared, but there is a general distinction between so-called black tea (literally "crimson tea", according to the Chinese characters) and green tea. Tea is said to be used by more people throughout the world than any other beverage except water and recent research indicates that drinking green tea may prevent or postpone the onset of cancer. "Tea" is the suggested theme for an essay this week. What thoughts or experiences does this word bring to your mind?

About 1500 years ago, tea was introduced into Japan from China along with Buddhism.

About 88 days after the beginning of spring, many girls in dark blue kimonos cover their heads with white Japanese towels, tuck up their sleeves with red bands and pick tea leaves. It is a beautiful, picturesque scene.

Our tea shrubs are about one-meter-high and we pick fresh tea leaves only once a year. To my surprise, in Indonesia, tea trees may be several meters high so people usually use ladders when picking tea leaves and they pick young leaves several times a year.

Many years ago, when I was riding a 1st class Chinese train, train employees handed passengers empty tea mugs with tea leaves in them and a lid on top. Several minutes later, they poured hot water in them. I removed the lid and looked inside the mug. The tea leaves were floating around on the water and I was quite embarrassed when I noticed how the Chinese people were drinking their

tea. They were sipping it through a thin gap after lifting the lid just a little to keep from drinking the tea leaves. I was quite interested to see the Chinese way of drinking tea.

(TSUYOSHI HAMADA, Minami, Nagoya)

It is said that tea has medicinal value. Of course, Japanese knew its value in the Edo era, but it has now been proven by medical research. Recently, natural foods are being promoted and tea is being reevaluated along with this trend.

But I will write about a memorable incident related to tea when I was young. My home town is in Shizuoka Prefecture, which is famous for its tea. When I was in the second year of high school, my friend and I went into a woods and enjoyed walking around. We found a small hut where no one was present where tea leaves were being dried in a large earthenware vessel. The hut was filled with a pleasant fragrance. A man came back to the hut and saw us. He smiled and continued to stir the leaves. That was my first and perhaps last experience to see how tea leaves were prepared in the traditional way.

I cannot find the words to describe my sweet memory. Time does not return. Where is my friend? Where are the woods? I do not know.

(MICHIKO SANDO, Minami, Nagoya)

There is no other beverage so universal as tea (in a wide sense, including green tea, black tea, etc.) for all ages and in all places, except for plain water. (Coffee is popular throughout the world now, but its history in the East is not so long.) This is evident in the fact that the pronunciation of each nation's word corresponding to "tea" resembles each other: French *thé*, German *Tee*, Italian and Spanish *té*, Russian *chai*, Chinese, Korean and Japanese *cha*. This universality can be understood by investigating the history of tea.

The original habitat of the tea (*cha*) plant is said to be China. At first, tea was said to be used as a medicine in old China. Tea plants along with the habit of drinking tea gradually spread throughout the world. Concerning Japan, it is said that Saichô (the founder of the Tendai-shû) carried back seeds of tea from China in 805 and planted them in Hiei-zan.

There are different kinds of tea depending upon how they are processed. Black tea is refined through a process of fermenting tea leaves and green tea is refined without a fermentation process. Oolong tea is refined through a half-fermentation process. The habit of drinking black tea was introduced into Europe in the 17th century. Now India and Sri Lanka are the main areas for growing tea leaves used for black tea. It was in the Meiji era that people began drinking black tea in our country.

Cha (green tea) is the most popular beverage for us Japanese. It has permeated deep into our lives. In the feudal age, drinking tea was esteemed by the *bushi*, ruling classes, and was developed to the level known as *sadô* or *cha-no-yû* (tea ceremony). A man named Rikyû further developed *cha-no-yû* into its present form in the 16th century. The tea ceremony is considered to be part of the aesthetic education of young women even today. We have many daily expressions concerning tea, for it is inseparably bound up with our lives. *O-cha-ni-suru* means taking a rest from one's work; *o-cha-o-nigosu* means patch up; *o-cha-o-iu* means bantering and *o-cha-jo* means a resting place of a temple or shrine where tea is served.

I am very fond of drinking green tea. Though young people in my office drink coffee during a break, I prefer green tea. As my secretary knows that I drink a large quantity of green tea, she places a teapot on my desk full of green tea in addition to my own regular teacup. Today, there are many magazines related to

health and they often emphasize the benefits of green tea, which I think is quite natural considering that tea was originally used as a medicine. According to a recent study, green tea is said to be effective for preventing cancer. Tea is also very convenient to carry when we go abroad to other countries where we cannot drink water. I will continue to drink this cheap and handy beverage, green tea, hereafter as a part of my life.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I prefer tea to coffee. Every day, I drink various kinds of tea, except for Korean tea. At present, I am crazy about a healthy tea called *dokudami*.

One day, one of my friends said to me, "If we don't go to the bathroom very often, that means our kidneys are not functioning well. *Dokudami* tea helps us urinate; therefore it is good for the kidneys." What she said is very true. When I drink *dokudami* tea several times a day, I go to the bathroom six or seven times.

It is said Japanese tea contains much vitamin C, which enhances one's beauty. As a child, I heard that Japanese tea made one's skin dark. However, that is completely wrong and I, myself, am proof of that.

I will close my essay with a helpful suggestion. If you visit Eikoku-ya at Ka-kuôzan, you can find various kinds of tea from all over the world.

(HIROMI FURUTA, Kita, Nagoya)

We are enjoying a peaceful time these days with plenty of food and drinks, but when I was a schoolboy, before the Pacific War, *ocha* was rather precious. At lunch time, *ocha* was only given to teachers while we pupils were provided with hot water poured into the corner of a lunch box. During my six years in grade school, pupils were never given *ocha* at lunch time.

Since *ocha* itself was valuable, the tea grounds were not carelessly thrown

away. They were used again as food for horses. We ourselves would sometimes eat them, mingled with a little bit of boiled rice, toward the end of the war when foods, including rice, were scarce. Tea grounds were also used for cleaning rooms. Before vacuum cleaners were introduced into homes, brooms were used instead. When using brooms, some housewives would scatter tea grounds on the floor of living rooms. Then, the dust sticking to the grounds was completely swept out of the room.

Ocha is said to be one of the best beverages to keep a person in good health. I believe *ocha* is the best drink for maintaining one's mental and physical health compared to alcoholic or soft drinks. However, I try not to drink too much *sencha*, a kind of *ocha*, because it keeps me from sleeping at night.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

I am a tea lover. A cup of cold *mugicha*, made from roasted barleycorn, is better than cold beer to me. I have black tea at breakfast, oolong tea at lunch, green tea with a snack and roasted tea (*hôji-cha*) at supper.

I usually get back from work too late to have supper with my family, but while my wife serves me supper, my daughters appear from their rooms and join me at the table. Then they pick up something from the table and put it into their mouths. They say apologetically that they are a little hungry. We talk about what has happened during the day. They wait for me to have tea and fruit together. This tea time late at night is a precious time for us.

When my wife doesn't have time to make a cake, we buy several kinds of cakes at a confectionery shop on weekends. We share each piece of cake and talk about the taste over a cup of tea. Therefore, tea not only quenches my thirst but also give me time to be with my family at home. We can talk, think

and relax with it. I cannot imagine my life without tea.

(TOSHIKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

I am reminded of the trip to England I made some fifteen years ago. I was taking private English lessons from a British young man at that time who organized a tour group one summer from among the students he was teaching.

Even now, I remember clearly the first sight of England when our plane flew over the patchwork of green and yellow fields. The hotel we first stopped at was in Gosport, a small town in southern England where our tutor's family lived. To my surprise, there was a kettle in each room so that guests could make tea at any time they wanted. Furthermore, what startled me was the white stains on the inside bottom of the kettle. However, that is easy to understand for the water in England contains much calcium and magnesium which caused the "white bottoms of kettles". On the following day, we had a chance to experience a so-called afternoon tea-with-bun in the backyard of a restaurant. The bun went very well with tea and I realized why British people are so fond of tea.

Now I remember reading about George Orwell sipping tea, not from a cup but from a saucer. This might be considered impolite, but he wanted to identify with the working class people in the Victorian Age. He also wrote a booklet on how to make good tea. He wrote in that book that the teapot must be warmed first before pouring the tea and so on.

Although our trip was very short, only two weeks, we enjoyed sharing the experience of genuine British life because our teacher himself drove a rented minibus and took us to places off the regular tourist routes. After that trip, I acquired a taste for tea and wine which has continued ever since.

(SHOJI DOMAE, Kasugai)

I enjoy pursuing topics which I have taken for granted and have never thought seriously about in my ordinary life. Today's theme of Tea is a case in point.

Usually, when I compose an essay, I first consult a dictionary or encyclopedia to get relevant information. In the process, I am especially pleased when I come across many unknown facts or anecdotes. In regard to tea, I came to know how to make tea best according to its varieties. Features of each variety differ from place to place. This practical information made me happy. I will now be able to enjoy subtle differences in the taste of tea. The amount of tea leaves, the temperature of the water, the length of time—all these factors have a delicate effect on the taste of tea.

In retrospect, it has been customary for me to make tea by the rule of thumb. But now I have a better understanding of how to brew the best kind of tea, considering the subtle differences between each variety. This was the great benefit gained from writing these lines on the theme of Tea.

Now, wouldn't you like to have a cup of tea which I will make for you?

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

Today, there is a wide variety of beverages from which we can choose, but in the old days, green tea was the simple but precious beverage for Japanese, deeply rooted in their daily lives and became an important part of Japanese culture. When we sit in the stillness of a tea room, surrounded by elaborate tea utensils at a tea ceremony, we can easily escape from the hustle and bustle of our daily lives and completely relax over a cup of tea. In February, at Shiratori Garden, I had such an experience for the first time in many years.

Today, more and more people are concerned about their health, especially when they reach a so-called ripe age. Cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure,

and so on, which are called adult illnesses, are their undesirable companions. Recently, medical research has proven that green tea contains various elements that stimulate good health. That is good news to know. I myself drink quite a bit of green tea. I don't need to buy it because in Japan, on many occasions, green tea is used as a gift and I try to use it before the taste is spoiled.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

September23 Message(Theme #335)

This 23rd day of September is called Shûbun no Hi in Japan, autumnal equinox day, when the length of day and night are equal. ("Equinox" comes from Latin words meaning "equal night".) In the West, it is considered the first day of autumn and here, it is the middle of the traditional period called higan, literally meaning "other shore", when visits are made to the graves of loved ones. It is also the day in 1790 when Karai Senryû departed for that "other shore". His name was given to a peculiar type of Japanese poem, senryû, which he made popular. For an essay this week, I am suggesting one of those four themes: Equinox, Autumn, Higan, or Senryû, depending upon the writer's interest.

The smell of burning dried leaves and twigs and feeling the coolness of the autumn air on my skin reminds me of the difficult days just after the war. Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945 and we Japanese who lived in Korea were all compelled to return to Japan. My family, except for our father who had to remain there for a few more months to settle many difficult matters caused by the

surrender, left our home in early September in order to embark from a former naval port located west of Pusan. However, the ship was greatly delayed due to the general confusion of shipping arrangements. So we had to stay there for a month and a half waiting for the ship that would carry us to Japan. It was October 20, 1945 when we arrived at our father's birthplace, then owned by his brother, located in a rural village in the western part of Tottori Prefecture.

For a while after that, I could not help having a difficult time which may be called, with a bit of exaggeration, a "revolution" in my life. Until now, I have spent 17 years in Korea and 51 years in Japan, which is a three-to-one ratio, but insofar as fond memories are concerned, it is one-to-one. This comparison will not change to the end of my life.

Three big reunion parties sponsored by the three different schools I attended long ago will be held this autumn. The atmosphere at these parties is still very lively. All members seem to have similar memories of the days just after the war. (HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

The 31-syllable-poem called *waka* (*tanka*) has been popular throughout our history though it remains unclear exactly when and how this ancient poetic style developed. The first half of a *waka* (*kami-no-ku*) consists of 5-7-5 syllables and the second half (*shimo-no-ku*) 7-7 syllables. Later, the first half of a *waka* developed into an independent poetic form called *haiku*. The concise form of a *haiku* requires it to convey a vivid image with no superfluous words. As it was also called *haikai* (a joke) at first, *haiku* was originally a comic verse, but it was refined into a highly sophisticated form of serious poetry; the comical and satirical elements evolved as an independent genre known as *senryû*.

Senryû was developed into its present form by Karai Senryû, as Dr. Offner

noted, and became popular in the middle of the Edo era. When composing *haiku*, basic rules related to *kire-ji* and *kigo* must be followed. *Kire-ji* is a word which indicates the end of a phrase, such as *kana*, *keri*, etc. *Kigo* is a word which is related to one of the four seasons. But in the case of *senryū*, there are no such requirements, so it is rather easy to compose in comparison with *haiku*. *Senryū* acutely deals with humane feelings, the prevailing state of society, manners and customs, etc. as its subject matter and is characterized by comicality, satire and wit.

Here I will provide some illustrative examples of modern *senryū* quoted from books and newspapers at hand.

Mada-neteru, kaette-mireba mô-neteru. (Still asleep. When I get home, already asleep.) We must be frugal in our usage of words when composing *haiku* or *senryū* because we must use only 17 syllables in them. Therefore we must adopt many abbreviations. The subject of *mada-neteru* may be the writer's wife. The subject of *kaette-mireba* is the writer himself and the subject of *mô-neteru* is his wife again. There are no explanations about subjects and times, but we can easily imagine that the sleeping person is his wife and the times are early morning and late at night. Furthermore, we can imagine a salaried man's disappointment and his wife's situation, getting tired awaiting her husband's return. Imagination is the most important element when we read *senryū*.

li-kanai,jûnen-tattara okkanai. (Good wife. After ten years, dreadful.) In this example, "good wife" at the beginning means a newly-married wife. Needless to say, *kanai* and *okkanai* rhyme, which makes this poem more interesting.

Hai-hiru, ano-menseki-ni kono-taijû. (High heels; this weight on that area.) Of course, "this weight" suggests a woman's great body weight and "that area" means the small area at the base of the

high-heeled shoes. The image of a fat woman walking moves us to laughter.

O-goe-de kagi-no oki-basho iwanaide (Don't tell me where you put the key in such a loud voice—a thief may hear our conversation.)

We often experience such situations in our daily lives. The themes of *senryū* are our lives themselves. *Senryū* can be said to be the simplest and easiest genre of our literary arts.

(MIKIHICO YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I have been interested in *senryū* poems for a long time. They are the same as *haiku* in that they have seventeen syllables. But *senryū* include current situations or daily events the writer encounters. It will bring enjoyment when a good *senryū* is composed. It is really a casual hobby among elegant and romantic people in "Senryū Fan Clubs" throughout Japan. I remember some *senryū* I learned in my high school days. For example:

Kôkô o shitai jibun ni oya wa nashi ("His parents are no longer around when he wants to be devoted to them"). *Honburi ni natte tobidasu amayadori* ("I ran out of the place where I had taken shelter when it began to rain very hard"). *Isô-rô sanbaime niwa sotto dashi* ("A hanger-on hesitates to ask for a third helping of rice"). As soon as I read these verses, I exclaimed, "They are very true." At the same time, I understood that *senryū* involved a human touch, cynicism and sarcasm directed at others or to oneself while *haiku* are descriptive of human life and nature with seasonal words included. Anyway, *senryū* or *haiku* are the shortest poems in the world. It was very good of Mr. Senryū Karai to leave us such a wonderful Japanese literary form more than two hundred years ago.

Recently, I thought again "very true" upon reading these *senryū* in a current magazine: *Shiawase na hanashi ni akiru hito no mimi* ("A man prefers pitiful stories about others more than happy ones.

Listening to the happy experiences of others bores him"). *Jisho ni nai kotoba de chichi o mata damasu* ("A son deceived his aged father again by using words not found in the dictionary. The father pretends to understand the new words his son uses, even though they may be coined by the son"). *Toshiyori ga ninpu ni yuzuru shiruva-seki* ("An aged person offers his reserved 'silver seat' to a pregnant woman. Aren't there any reserved seats for pregnant women?")

It is interesting to read *senryū* with a human touch for weak people and cynicism for persons in power.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

My essay is about *higan-bana*, or *higan* flower. Of course, you know that the flower with this name is big and red.

I was fond of reading books when I was a child. I remember the story about a *higan-bana* which I read when I was very young. I have forgotten most of the story, except for its ending. I felt very sad when I read it because a good girl died in a field near a mountain where *higan* flowers were blooming profusely. The lasting impression of *higan* flowers I gained from that story was very sorrowful. A childhood memory is very strong, so I still feel sad when I see that flower.

I think that childhood impressions were very important in my experience. A child's education exerts a great influence throughout his or her life even to old age. Children who are acquainted with God's Word should experience healthy growth. Even if they forget it, they may remember it when they are in doubt and can find the right path.

We should express our thoughts which we think are right. Recently our entire society has become more difficult, but we should have the courage to do what we believe to be right.

(MICHIKO SANDO, Minami, Nagoya)

For many years, I thought that *higan* was what we called the world after death, as opposed to *shigan*, but now I understand that *higan* is what we should keep in our minds during our lifetime.

Whenever either of the *higan* periods came, my mother made many large *ohagi*, using malted crystal sugar instead of regular sugar. They tasted so delicious that I always ate too many and was called *anko-musume*. During those times my parents used to visit the family's grave with beautiful flowers; but they didn't force me to go with them. My mother said, "When the time comes, you will know." Now I sometimes visit the grave where she is sleeping at times other than the *higan* and *bon* periods to clean the gravestone and recite a sutra. Especially on Mother's Day, I never fail to take many red and pink (not white) carnations to decorate the grave beautifully. Fortunately, it is situated on the top of a large, low hill in Heiwa Park and I can enjoy viewing a pleasant, calm panorama of the Higashiyama area while talking to her in a quiet atmosphere.

Many people question how such memorial services for the dead are related to Buddhism. What on earth does Buddhism have to do with such a service? But such questions are not so important to me. Visiting graves of loved ones to pray for the repose of their souls is a very natural feeling of human beings regardless of faith. I consider it a good custom for us Japanese to designate certain days in a year to remember the deceased, especially for those who are leading busy lives every day.

Actually, holding memorial services for ancestors was not at the heart of Buddhism. It is said that *ekō*, an old Indian concept for applying one's good deed to another person's benefit, was connected to Daijō Buddhism, in which the spirit of doing good for others was considered very important. In Japan, *ekō* has been applied to the benefit of a dead

person who can no longer do good deeds. The relationship between Buddhism and funerals in Japan dates back to the Nara period. With the widespread dissemination of Jôdô doctrine in the Heian period, how to ensure that their loved ones would be reborn in the world of jôdô became very important for people. Connecting the ideas of ekô and jôdô, which supported and developed the custom of holding memorial services for ancestors, was thoroughly confirmed by the establishment of the *danka* and temple system in the Edo period.

The word *jôdô* sounds more romantic than the word *higan*, but when I started to read the Muryôju Sutra, in which the circumstances of jôdô are described in detail, I was very disappointed with the Indian paradise after death because it was far from the image of the pure land which we Japanese usually have in our minds. *Higan* is very different from jôdô in many ways. It is what Shakamuni's teaching is really about and we cannot reach it or gain it by only repeating sacred words. It is a state of mind rather than a place, completely released from every human evil desire or worry or delusion which we suffer in real life. 妄想

In order to gain *higan*, we are required to practice six *haramitsu* disciplines in our daily lives which are taught in the Daibon Hannya Sutra. We can learn them by understanding the Hannya Shin Sutra, which is the most popular short sutra we can recite in front of altars at home. Not across the Ganges River nor far away in the western pure land nor high in the glory of heaven, I hope *higan* always resides in our hearts.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

This time, a number of themes were suggested from which we can choose. Considering the various themes, the one which is of particular interest to me is "Autumn".

Thinking of autumn, or fall, I naturally think of reading books as every one else does. Nevertheless, I am in a somewhat different mood now. I would prefer to take advantage of this opportunity to do some recollecting now at the beginning of an early autumn evening instead of doing so as the newspapers do during the hectic time at the end of the year. Most Japanese newspapers choose ten big, serious events both domestically and internationally at the end of every year. I am not sure whether the same is true in foreign countries.

Not only in Britain but in other countries as well, people will remember what they were doing on the day Princess Diana, who was in the prime of her life, was killed as the result of a stupid, preventable, reckless automobile accident caused by a drunken driver who was weaving along the road at a ridiculously high speed of between 120 and 160 kilometers an hour and not wearing a seat belt. Soon after Diana's death, we heard of the death of Mother Teresa, the Nobel laureate, an even greater humanitarian who had been suffering from a heart problem.

No sooner had we learned that the haze caused by forest fires caused two deaths in Indonesia than we heard of the crash of an Indonesian airplane which might not have been unrelated to the forest fires. Thus, the smoke pollution from those forest fires may have been the cause of 234 deaths, including six Japanese. One of them was Kazutomo Otake who was despatched by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and was a specialist in engineering science at a university. He was making a determined effort to discover how to reduce toxic substances when making a fire. He was also involved in the study of how to protect the environment by reducing atmospheric pollution in Indonesia. It was ironic that he was killed as

the result of forest fires that had caused serious atmospheric pollution.

Looking back at the past, it was said that most senior citizens in the U. S. clearly remember what they were doing when the 35th president, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, was assassinated in Dallas in 1963.

Thus far, I have noted a number of newsworthy events that outshone the repatriation of Mr. Shôichi Yokoi in the 47th year of Showa (1972). When thinking of this man who had been hiding and wandering in a dense jungle for almost 28 years not knowing that the war had ended, the environmental pollution in Yokkaichi City comes to my mind. Many items related to his return were reported. On the day following his return, a group of athletes gained gold, silver and copper medals in the 70-meter-high ski jumping competition in the Winter Olympic Games in Sapporo City, Hokkaido. Two weeks later, the Asama Sanso mountain villa in Karuizawa was turned into a battleground between the Red Army and the police. Two days after the Asama Sanso event, a thaw in U. S.-China relations resulted from the visit to Peking of the 37th U. S. president, Richard Milhous Nixon.

After five decades of being occupied by the U. S., on the 15th day of May, 1972, Okinawa was returned to Japan. Thus, Okinawa Prefecture was born and joined the other 42 prefectures, so now there are one *to* (Tokyo-to), one *dô* (Hokkaidô), two *fu* (Osaka-fu and Kyôto-fu) and 43 *ken* (prefectures).

It was on September 25, 1972 that Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka signed an agreement to normalize diplomatic relations between Japan and China, after expressing his sincere apology for Japan's past actions. For two-and-a-half decades after that, Mr. Shôichi Yokoi spent his life in Japan.

Global warming has now become an international problem which we must

consider deeply. It is more important to consider it than to determine companies' responsibilities regarding environmental pollution. Tens of thousands of Japanese and American companies have invaded China resulting in the amount of trade increasing some sixty times what it was previously. It seems everything has expanded very rapidly, but some things haven't changed, such as the avarice and discord against which Mr. Shôichi Yokoi protested. Avaricious conduct is similar to war.

When people have more arms than necessary, they want to fight. It appears that Mr. Yokoi's protests have not been heard. This is a pretty dark ending for this essay, but I will try to be more cheerful next time.

(JAIME IWAI, Owariasahi)

On a fine morning just after the second equinox of the year, I breathe deeply, inhaling the fragrance of autumn. It comes from a *kin-mokusei*, or fragrant olive tree, in the front yard. Looking up at the tree, I find it studded all over with tiny, golden blossoms, the very harbingers of the new season, autumn.

"Now, the heat of summer is gone, the autumn has come," I say to myself. The beautiful scent of the tree is the spirit of autumn itself. How beautiful it is! I cannot help but inhale the superb aroma to the bottom of my lungs to fully enjoy the autumnal quality of life.

Autumn brings mellow fruits. People are busy celebrating an abundant harvest. Everywhere in the country, festivals are held at village shrines where young and old gather together to share the joy the season brings them. But the season of merrymaking is too short. Autumn is called the fall of the year. The daytime is getting shorter and shorter, day by day, with the night getting longer and longer. Full of pathos, reddish leaves of maples cause us to think about the brevity of life. They grow scarlet until,

at last, they will fall in the nippy air, a harbinger of winter.

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

September 30 Message (Theme #336)

This last day of the month may be an appropriate time to consider the relationship of "first" and "last", recalling Jesus' words in Mark 10:31. Earlier this month, the news media concentrated on stories related to the lives, deaths and funerals of two outstanding women. One was called "Princess" and the other was called "Mother". In many ways, considering their ages, social positions, nationalities, personal histories and life styles, these women were very different, but there was also a certain human, or feminine, quality that was similar; their spectacular funeral processions were televised to a worldwide audience. Now that a few weeks have passed since their departure from this life, what impressions remain in your mind regarding Princess Diana and Mother Teresa? What reactions did you have regarding how the media treated their lives and their deaths? What memories, current impressions or general comments on either or both of these extraordinary women do you have?

I know well the name of Mother Teresa. She was given love from God and she shared it with people who needed it. I read that she had nothing but a small bag even when she went on a trip. I cannot find words to praise her. I remember a novel written in Japanese by Endô Shûsaku, *Fukai Kawa*. When I read about India or the Ganges River, I felt some-

thing related to God's will in the story. I feel the same about the end of Mother Teresa's life.

In regard to Princess Diana, I did not know about her activities, so I was more astonished at the funeral procession and the public funeral than about the news of the accident. I do not like gossip, but I felt that she loved many people. Her death was regrettable because she cannot continue to carry on her volunteer work now, but I hear that a volunteer fund has been established for that purpose. Perhaps God loves her.

I am thankful for God's eternal love and I reflect upon my thoughts and actions. I must do what is right even though it is difficult.

(**MICHIKO SANDO**, Minami, Nagoya)

Everybody in the world was shocked to learn that Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed in an accident in Paris. She did not die happily.

According to the television broadcasts, her life lacked love from beginning to end. She was never blessed with good boyfriends. That might be one of the causes of her death. If she had not fallen in love with the rich Egyptian, she might still be alive. She led a miserable life, especially during the latter part of it. There is a proverb which fits her case very well: fairest flowers fade soonest.

Both Princess Diana and Mother Teresa excelled in welfare work. Although they did the same kind of work, the former was showy and the latter was conservative. Likewise, the funeral of Princess Diana was a large-scaled one while the funeral of Mother Teresa, on the other hand, was simple. But I was shocked to see the face of Mother Teresa displayed in public.

It is said that death makes a person a saint. Watching the funeral of Princess Diana on television and noticing the attitude of the people, her death might be such an example. In the case of Mother

Teresa, on the other hand, she was already a saint, so she didn't have to be made one.

Finally, we can say with certainty that the mass media changed Diana's life. If she had not been hounded by the mass media, she could have enjoyed her life as a human being more. With regard to Mother Teresa, the mass media gave a faithful report of her work and did not interrupt her life. Sometimes, Princess Diana took advantage of the mass media to gain the support of the people, but Mother Teresa always had the support of the general public even if she didn't take advantage of it.

(HIROMI FURUTA, Kita, Nagoya)

The death of Princess Diana has posed many problems to the whole world.

Diana provided a topic of conversation from the very beginning of her marriage to Charles, the Prince of Wales, because of her attractive appearance and elegant behavior. It was a matter of regret that the couple got divorced owing to each other's infidelity.

Diana was very popular among people even after her divorce and became a suitable target for the mass media. It is said that an indirect cause of her death was the persistent chase by ill-bred journalists called paparazzi. It is easy to criticize the ruthless conduct of these pursuers, but they are supported by the public's insatiable curiosity about famous people. The situation is almost the same here in Japan. Television programs on weekday mornings are full of trivial gossip about public entertainers: their marriages, childbirths, immorality, divorces and so on. Whenever I happen to stay at home on a weekday, I am amazed at such worthless rumors, which waste valuable time. Members of the imperial family often become the subject of a talk and Princess Masako is a prime target. She has not yet produced an heir to the imperial throne, so the

mass media is much concerned about her becoming pregnant. In the case of the Japanese mass media, however, I think their attitude and ways of obtaining information are more refined than that of the United Kingdom. If they are impolite to our imperial family, they will certainly be castigated by public opinion. I think this points up a difference regarding people's respect toward the imperial family in Japan and the royal family in Great Britain. According to recent news, the government of Great Britain is investigating how to control the eccentric activities of the paparazzi at this time.

Princess Diana was a glorious symbol of the royal family. Her death has stimulated anxiety about the existence of the royal family itself. Charles, the Prince of Wales, has already lost popularity due to his infidelity and his attitude toward Diana thereafter. They say that people over there support Prince William as the next king, skipping over the Crown Prince.

In countries with royal families, generally speaking, it is a difficult question whether people wish to continue to support them in the future. The situation is as noted above even in the United Kingdom, which has been said to be the last country to maintain a royal tradition. Also in Japan, people's feeling toward the imperial family has changed very much in this half century. Young people today especially are indifferent, not to say disrespectful of the imperial family. Our constitution states: "The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom reside sovereign power." Here, the people's will is most important. I cannot guarantee with confidence that our imperial family system will continue for a long time in the future after my generation, which has a special feeling of respect for the emperor, has passed away.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

The tragic death of Princess Diana made us reflect on various problems she confronted and which we also face in our lives, but Mother Teresa deeply moved us by her extraordinary way of living. She didn't need jewelry, dresses, a husband, children, boyfriends or a comfortable house to find happiness. Wealth, fame, honor, social status, which most people (especially men) are likely to hope for in reward for their contributory work, had nothing to do with her. All she had in her life were two saris and love for everybody, especially the poor and sick people lying in the streets.

Usually, people want to get out of the misery of poverty. In contrast, she left her career as a teacher at a convent school and went into the slums of Calcutta, becoming poor herself, in order to help and love the poor, dying people, following the words of God she heard in a train at the age of 36. "Devoting myself to the poor and suffering people is my mission given by God," she said. But it is far beyond our thought and imagination. We can easily imagine a person making a great effort to engage in respectable work to contribute to society, the nation or the world, which usually ensures higher income, social status or honor, but she dared to situate herself in the lower, darker, dirtier, poorer slums to accomplish her mission in the love of God.

She believed that each body she nursed was the body of God and in loving those who came to her, she was loving God. "It's very impressive for a person to die filled with love," she stated. "So spread your love everywhere you go, first in your own home. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next-door neighbor." Her love of God motivated her every action and she taught us how much one person can love people.

I believe she is one of the greatest persons of modern times and is considered to be a living saint. Most of us could not do as she did, but anyway we

should start with an easy thing and progress little by little, first in our home and around us, just as she said. Following the love Mother Teresa has shown us through her outstanding activities, let us try to make our homes places of love and forgiveness.

(KIKUKO KUWAHARA, Nakagawa, Nagoya)

All human beings have their respective fates which are not under the control of their own wills. Even if a certain person wants to obtain a certain result, the outcome is liable to be quite different than the original expectation. Even if other people around a person make efforts to make that one admirable, there could be a miserable result. Conversely, even if other people plotted to snare a certain person, that person could possibly be highly rewarded.

I believe that the ability of human beings is limited and there seems to be another, unseen power which can control human abilities, which may be said to be controlled by God. Popularity, respect and grief were common to the late Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, but there seems to be a basic difference between them. It is that the former died without living her entire life given by Heaven, whereas the latter died after she had lived her entire life given by Heaven. Many people all over the world deplored their deaths similarly. However, I cannot help thinking their fates were decided by the will of God which is quite fair for all people.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

All men are created equal, yet there is nothing so equal as death for human beings.

Mother Teresa, the Roman Catholic nun who devoted her life to the poorest of the poor, passed away on September 5, at the age of 87. She was a great "mother", bringing her messages of faith and love to all the people in the world.

She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her charitable work and earned her nickname, "Saint of the gutters".

There was a meaningful encounter between Mother Teresa and Princess Diana in New York on June 18. They had a healing effect on lonely and needy people around the world. Their genuine kindness to the needy deserves respect.

Princess Diana's fatal accident on August 31 was a shock beyond expression. She had been a star whose every move, every gesture, every smile, every frown were news! Many people had such an abnormal interest in her that the paparazzi did not mind the risk of being accused of bad manners. On the one hand, she was scandalous and had to shoulder some of the blame. On the other, she was not only a loving mother for her children but also a good will ambassador, a nurse and an anti-mine crusader. Her rebellious spirit against the establishment blew fresh air into the monarchy. It is said that "the nail that protrudes gets beaten down", but she was really brave to venture forth. Princess Diana's life was far different from that of Mother Teresa, but how human, how feminine she was! Beyond question, she wasn't a perfect person, but who is?

There are thousands of people, including me, who are still being inspired in many ways by these extraordinary women. May the "Mother" and the "Princess" rest in peace forever.

(**SADAE HASHIMOTO**, Minami, Nagoya)

I was somewhat ashamed to realize how little I knew about the great "Missionary to the World" as I read a couple of her obituaries. She founded Missionaries of Charity. She made up her mind to devote herself to the poorest of the poor. I heard that a Japanese Buddhist priest who saw her called her a "Bodhi-sattva". His awesome words regarding her tell me everything about the great woman missionary. I cannot help bowing

in prayer. I had better learn more about this contemporary saint. I firmly believe that she will go down in history as the great Missionary to the World.

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

While I was watching a talk show on CNN (Cable News Network), a caption suddenly appeared. It reported that Diana, Princess of Wales, was seriously injured in a car accident and taken to a hospital. A few minutes later, the regular program was replaced by a special report from Paris before dawn. At first, I was wondering how she could have survived in such a badly damaged car as was shown on television. About half an hour later, I was shocked to hear a doctor's announcement of her death. She was too young to die. Her two young sons especially need her care and love. Her job as a princess could be done by another person, no one else can replace her as their mother.

Within a week of her death, Mother Teresa passed away. It was sad news, but not so shocking. I was prepared for that news because I knew that she had been suffering from a serious illness in recent years. The *Asahi Shinbun* carried a picture of her, taken in New York City's South Bronx in June this year, on the front page with a brief article reporting her death. In the picture, she was standing with Diana. It seemed as if they were together in heaven, too. It is said that her activity toward dying poor people was consistent. She didn't give them medicine but let them die with the dignity of a human being. She reminded the rejected people that they were also loved by God.

Mother Teresa's story was completed by her death. Her activity will be carried on by the members of the order she established. There remains no worry after her death. On the other hand, Diana's story suddenly ended while many people still thought it would continue. That

was one reason that I was shocked with her death.

I have heard that when Princess Di was a high school student, she realized that she had a special ability to make other people happy. If it was true, she naturally had what it takes to be a princess. Unfortunately, I think, she didn't know how to make herself happy. Her parents got divorced when she was very young. Since then, she grew up without their care and love. Her repeated failure to make up with Prince Charles might be ascribed to her lack of experience of being with her parents. It might be in vain to write about her with "if", but if her parents had loved each other and not gotten divorced, her story would be quite different. I perceive her death as another lesson regarding the important roles that parents play for their children. (TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

October 7 Message (Theme #337)

If we look up at the sky on a clear night, we will see a multitude of stars, and some of us will share the reaction of the writer of the 8th Psalm who recognized how insignificant human beings are in comparison with stars, both of which were created by God. Yet, since human beings have minds, they are superior to stars and able to study them. Such a scientific study is called astronomy. Astrology is the study of the positions of stars in the belief that they have an influence on the course of human affairs. Some people regularly consult an astrological chart but as Shakespeare noted in his drama, Julius Caesar, "the fault . . . is not in our stars, but in ourselves". A traditional Japanese festival is related to a couple of stars and popular actors, singers and athletes are also

called stars.— "Stars" is the suggested theme for an essay. Writers may choose which kind of stars to write about.

Human beings have been concerned about the stars in the sky from time immemorial. In ancient times, people must have been struck with awe by the very existence of the heavenly bodies. The polar star stands still and other stars move around it incessantly. The sun and the moon sometimes are eclipsed for some mysterious reason. A comet suddenly appears with its long tail. The feeling of awe, however, gradually changed into the spirit of inquiry regarding those natural phenomena and thus astronomy, the science of stars, began. Astrology, the study of stars in order to discern the future, must be considered a debasement of astronomy. I believe these two disciplines have the same origin. Astrology developed both in the East and the West, though the content is quite different. In our language, one of the meanings of *hoshi* is "something which governs fortune". For example, we have expressions such as *hoshi-mawari* (a turn of fortune's wheel) and *kôun no hoshi no moto ni umareru* (to be born under a lucky star).

The mysterious existence of stars also stimulates people's yearning for them. Stars have been a universal subject matter of poetry, songs, pictures, etc. both in the Orient and the Occident, together with the sun and the moon. We learned the poem "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" in our middle school days and most of us still remember it. The stars very often appear in our *kayô kyoku* (popular songs). They may be one of the most common themes of these songs, along with the moon, night, a flower, a harbor, etc. Stars have also become a motif of festivals throughout the world. *Tanabata*

(the Star Festival) in our country is one of them. It is said to be a combination of Chinese tradition with beliefs peculiar to Japan. We are told that once a year in the evening of July 7th, the Herd-boy Star (Altair) and the Weaver Star (Vega) meet in the Milky Way. It is said that our wishes will come true if we pray to these two stars. Today the legendary romance has been somewhat lost as a result of outer space exploration.

Stars are used as a symbol on the national flags of some countries. The Stars and Stripes of the United States is a typical example. The fifty white stars on the flag show the number of states at present. The national flags of China, Singapore, Australia and Turkey all include a design with stars on them. I wonder why administrators of those countries decided to adopt stars as symbols. What I mean is that stars appear in the evening, which, in Japanese thought, is a time of decline. (Our national flag depicts the rising sun, which symbolizes national prosperity.) Maybe the stars in the minds of Westerners symbolize the greatness manifested in another use of the word "star", meaning a distinguished person or a well-known actor or singer.

(MIKIHiko YOSHIMOTO, Gifu)

I have many memories about stars. I shall write about three of them.

One is a song about a star. You know it, of course, very well. It is "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are" I sang this song even though I did not know its meaning when I was five years old. It was the first time I sang an English song.

Next, I often look up at the stars in the constellation called Scorpion. My aunt lived in Taiwan when I was thirteen years old. Her letter informed me that she was looking at Scorpion and thinking of us. I looked up at the sky and longed for her. I have loved her very much from my childhood until now. She lives near

my house now, but I still look up at the sky and look for Scorpion. Perhaps it has become a habit of mine.

Third is *Tanabata* in Japanese. This was a traditional event in China that was brought to Japan and was mixed with Japanese religions. My family observed the traditional customs, not only at *Tanabata* but at other times as well. I wrote my hopes on rectangular pieces of paper and hung them on bamboo branches.

I have little interest in achieving stardom.

(MICHIKO SANDO, Minami, Nagoya)

These days I am not able to view the stars in the sky. A short time ago, I had the custom of finding three stars in the constellation Orion. Consulting a Japanese dictionary, I find that the Japanese word *hoshi* can also mean a criminal.

Anyway, I envy those stars who are popular actors, singers and athletes these days. (YASUKO IZUMI, Seto)

Just after the war, there was a best-selling book entitled *Aijô wa Furu Hoshi no Gotoku*, Affection Is Like Falling Stars, written by Shûjitsu Ozaki, who was captured by the Japanese army on a charge of spying for the German government and died in prison just before the end of the war. It was a collection of letters written by him in prison to his wife and daughter from his heart which suggested how to live through the hard times during the war. On the other hand, there were many movie stars such as Setsuko Hara and Yukiko Todoroki during the war years. And superior hotels have many stars marked beside their names in reference books. Thus star is a symbol of tenderness, admiration, love, beauty, elegance, nobility, superiority, purity, respect, etc.

I have an unhappy memory related to stars. Around 1940, there was a popular song titled *Kirameku Seiza*, Glittering Stars, which was a modest Japanese

love song. At that time, a "star" was the symbol of the Japanese Imperial Army, which was notorious for its tyranny. Military leaders became angry with that song because it included many unmanly words, such as love, tears, dreams, etc. which they disliked. They thought the star, their symbol, was degraded by the song and put pressure on Victor, the record company, which could not avoid changing the words of the song as they insisted in order to survive. It was the time when such unreasonable power was exerted over the whole nation. However, their influence waned in due course, being neglected by the stars. I hope stars remain as symbols of peace, love, beauty and tenderness.

(HARUJI FUKUMI, Minami, Nagoya)

Thinking of stars, the Star of Bethlehem, which is seen at the top of every Christmas tree in December, first came to my mind. It reminds us of the three Wise Men from the East who were led by it to the manger where the Baby Jesus lay. I like to sing "... the little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head. The stars in the sky look down where he lay." I also like the poem "Twinkle, twinkle, little star/ How I wonder what you are." Indeed, there are many poems related to stars. They stimulate hope and dreams in me.

In the dictionary, I found the following kinds of stars: fixed star, morning or evening star, binary star, double star, falling star, North star and shooting star. I am wondering about the last one, *nagare-boshi* in Japanese. When I looked up at the starry sky at night or in the early morning, I must have seen them. I also remember the words of one of my schoolteachers: "Be hopeful whenever you look up at the stars." The American flag has the same number of stars as the number of states in that country. Since America was established, everyone has been living in the hope that the stars give, I think. Also in Japan, a couple of

stars are happy to meet each other on the Star Festival evening. Usually, a star has five points, but the Star of David in the Israeli flag, made up of two triangles, has six. And I can make some green edible stars when I cut okra or gumbo, a kind of vegetable. They are sticky, but I eat them raw, flavored with soy sauce, and they taste good boiled in soup.

Stars are also related to fortune. I found such interesting expressions as: "He was born under a lucky star", "I trust my stars", "The stars were against it", "It is not in my stars to become wealthy". I would like to add that I like confetti and lumps of sugar shaped like stars. And I wish I had some star-shaped buttons on my blouse, if there are any.

(KAZUKO TAGUCHI, Fukushima)

After arriving at Auckland Airport around 6:00 p.m., we took a bus to Rotorua. There was a flat, spacious plain as far as we could see. It was getting dark and we were told that it would take four and-a-half hours to arrive at our destination so we all expected it to be a boring bus ride. Then, it became completely dark. Nowadays, we seldom, if ever, experience real darkness, even if we live in a rural area, but this was complete darkness. Then we saw the Milky Way high up in the sky. The stars stretched for miles and miles across the heavens. It was an incredibly beautiful sight. I was sitting in the back row of the bus. Fortunately, the top of the bus was a glazed glass window. All I had to do was rest my head on the seat pillow and look up. I could observe millions of stars without getting tired of it. It was truly a beautiful night. I will never forget it.

(MIDORI KODAMA, Midori, Nagoya)

I have never read my stars, but I occasionally look up at stars in the sky. I only know the names of a few famous ones. Nor do I know the names of constellations, with a few exceptions.

I remember an impressive occasion when I had a chance encounter with the constellation Scorpion at a remote seashore on a fine summer day. I was on a tour. I went out of a hotel with some of my friends to enjoy the cool air along the seaside, when a group of spectacular glittering stars near the horizon caught my eye. "That's the constellation Scorpion", I shouted. I was too absorbed in looking at the group of stars to think of those around me.

Come to think of it, I also remember those winter evenings when I was on my way home from the office more than a dozen years ago. I used to enjoy looking up at the constellation Orion in the eastern sky. Its almost rectangular shape with three stars inside made me realize that it was Orion. I hurried on my way home toward the constellation. It is a good old memory of mine.

News has recently reached us that the biggest, brightest star in the universe is said to have been identified. The celestial mammoth, named Pistol Star, may have been more massive than any other star. To my great surprise, the Pistol Star cannot be seen from the earth with the naked eye despite its brightness because of interstellar dust between the earth and the center of the Milky Way where it is located, the report said. On top of that, the mammoth star is estimated to have a mass 200 times that of the sun.

Now I am becoming more and more curious about stars, the very source of life of all living creatures.

(SHOJI SUGIMOTO, Suginami, Tokyo)

My knowledge about stars may be similar to that of an average elementary child. It is partly due to the location of our home. The sky is too bright to see stars here. I can recognize only a few constellations and stars of the first magnitude. Therefore, when I was in a desert in Arizona at night, it took me a

while to find the locations of familiar stars in the sky for there were too many stars there.

I missed the chance to see the Hyakutake Comet last year and the Hale-Bopp Comet this year, so I do not consider myself a frequent stargazer, but I once made a major effort to watch the Giacobinid meteoric shower about twenty years ago. Unfortunately it was cloudy on the day that we would most likely see the spectacular swarm of shooting stars. My brother and I had been looking forward to seeing it, so we searched for a high place on a map and decided to drive to Mt. Fuji. Although it was still cloudy at the foot of the mountain, we were able to drive up to a place above the clouds. We saw several cars parking to gaze at the sky along the road. It was chilly outside of the car. We took out an emergency blanket from the trunk and wrapped it around us. It was my first experience to see falling stars go across the sky. Above all, it was impressive when I saw a very bright one falling and felt able to hear the sound. But they were not what we expected to see. We waited until early morning, but the shower of meteors did not show up. The newspaper that evening carried a very short article reporting that the Giacobinid shower turned out to be not so bright as had been predicted.

Incidentally, I was interested in the crash of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 Comet into the planet Jupiter in 1994. The enormous energy on the impact produced a fireball bigger than Earth on Jupiter. Thanks to the Hubble space telescope, we could observe the spectacular space show. I have been to the Meteor Crater, east of Flagstaff, Arizona. It looked like a big volcano on a plain but it was actually made by the collision of a meteor. People who saw the movie entitled *Starman* might remember its last part which was filmed there. I can easily imagine the scene when the crater was made.

Therefore, I support the hypothesis that the extinction of dinosaurs was caused by a collision of a huge meteor followed by a drastic change in the weather. It is said that people who lived in a country named Kiyu in ancient China were worried about the possible falling of the sky. Now I cannot laugh at them. Have our space science and technology developed sufficiently to avoid such a tragedy? I will try not to think about it too seriously.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

July 15 Message (Subject #328)

Today's theme is : "Diet". One kind of diet is the usual food one eats, or a special selection of food chosen for medical or health reasons. Do you watch your diet carefully? What kind of diet do you prefer? What do you think of the diet of your country as compared to that of other countries?

There is an old question about whether we eat to live or live to eat. If we only eat to live, we are living in a very convenient society. Nowadays many kinds of cooked foods are available at various places besides restaurants. While some are ready to be eaten immediately, others require heating. We don't need a kitchen to heat them. All we need is a microwave oven or boiling water. If we don't have to cook at home, it can save a lot of time.

It has become common to see students in our lab eat instant food for a meal these days. One student ate a cup of instant noodles for lunch every day for three years. He had enough money to buy a decent lunch, but he saved most of his money to go skiing. He just didn't consider the quality of his lunch very im-

portant. His case was not exceptional. When I was a student, instant noodles were considered a kind of snack. I am not sure if we can get enough nutrition if we rely too much on instant food.

On the other hand, since the Meiji era, many kinds of foreign foods have been introduced into Japan. It is good that we can enjoy various kinds of meals at home.

I think cooking is a part of culture. Therefore, our culture is changing along with the progress of the food industry and the introduction of foreign foods. But I still believe, whatever progress has been made, nothing is better than a home-made meal. While I am eating what my wife prepared, I can sense how she loves me.

(TOSHIAKI MIYAKE, Tsuzuki, Yokohama)

September 21 Message

A popular singer or speaker who often appears on television may be called a tarento in Japanese. This is a transliteration of the English word "talent", meaning a natural gift or ability. The English word is derived from a parable of Jesus, found in the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, in which a man entrusted various amounts of money to servants, according to their abilities, before going on a journey. Upon his return, he required an accounting of how they spent the money. Those who used the money wisely and earned more were praised and rewarded, but the one who made no use of the money but hid it in the ground was condemned. The Greek word for the amounts of money in this parable was talanton, which originally denoted a weight. The meaning of this parable is that God has given all of us certain gifts, or talents, that are to be used for

a good purpose and that we will be held accountable for how we use them. From this parable, "talent" entered English with the meaning of a divinely-given gift. Not only special people, but all people, have natural gifts; this parable should cause us to reflect on whether or not we are using such gifts and how we are using them.

The parable of Jesus found in the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is one of my favorites. Before going on a journey, a man entrusted various amounts of money to servants according to their abilities. The Greek word for the amounts of money was *talanton*. Those who were entrusted with five and two *talanton* respectively used the money wisely and were praised and rewarded. But the one entrusted with one *talanton* did not make use of it but hid it in the ground. Different people may learn different lessons from this parable, but the person who made no use of the money attracted my attention.

I am sure that all people vaguely recognize that they have been given certain gifts, but those who feel their gifts are "inferior" to those of others tend to disregard their abilities. This tendency seems to be especially noticeable among us Japanese who I feel have been "graded" according to the results of various tests. If we are graded "high", we gain much self-confidence, but if we are rated "inferior", we see little or no hope of success in the future. What we must consider here is who is able to evaluate our abilities and on what basis: tests? teachers' comments? parents' judgment? I do not think any one of these is absolutely right, for they have not given the abilities. I believe it is God who gives us our natural abilities and since he has told us through this parable in the Gospel of Mat-

thew that we are all given certain abilities, we should ask him to help us recognize them. Once we have found them, we should make full use of them.

I notice I have been given such gifts as arranging various kinds of meetings, helping others study English and making a constant effort to reach a goal, so I am trying to make the best use of them. I am now in charge of several meetings, research projects and one club, so I find it enjoyable to work to make each one better and better. I also enjoy teaching English at various places: Chigusa High School, NHK Culture Center and as a private tutor of my own children.

I am now very excited about a new research project under way: "On Communicability." I spent a few years collecting raw data of student writing, analyzing the data and making a report on my research, whose main purpose was to see how communicable my students' writing was. Now the focus is on what criteria we can establish to measure the "communicability" of student writing. The research group, "Error Analysis", has decided to reanalyze the data I collected before and help me establish the concept of "communicability" after finding out about the objective criteria for that. Originally, Mr. Manabu Miyata, associate professor of Nagoya City University, took note of my data and suggested to the research group that they should study it more exactly.

(TOMOYASU KIMURA, Nishi, Nagoya)

The 30 pages of this 58th issue of "Daily Word" Echoes contain 55 essays contributed by 16 writers. In comparison, the first issue of the *Echoes*, dated August 29, 1982, had 11 pages with 27 essays contributed by 10 writers, including 4 of the writers in the current issue, whose English writing and listening ability has (hopefully) improved over the past 15 years. (C.O.)