

I arrived at Keisen in April 1939.

I sailed on the Hie Maru from Smith Cove in Seattle, Washington in January 1939 on what was to be the beginning of a sojourn of two years in Japan. The boat docked at Yokohama in early February. At this point it is necessary to mention two ladies who were good friends of my mother in Spokane, Washington but who had both returned to Japan in the 1930's. They were Mrs. Sachiko Nagahama and Mrs. Takako Higashidani, and they were to play significant roles in my future, something unbeknownst to me at that time.

Mrs. Nagahama was to meet me at Yokohama and she apparently was the one who suggested to my mother that I attend Waseda Kokusai Gakuin for schooling. Due to a family emergency she was not able to meet me; instead Mrs. Higashidani met me. I do not know what connection or knowledge she had about Keisen, but she took me to Keisen to make preliminary preparations for entrance in April. All this took place notwithstanding the fact that I had in my possession a formal gansho and a transcript of my high school scholastic record to submit to Waseda.

This was my very first trip to Japan. After entering Keisen in April, I was assigned to Kawai-ryō for one year; then I moved to Dai Ichi-ryō for the next year. Dormitory life at Kawai-ryō seemed more quiet and restrained. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Kawai sensei lived with us and that we shared morning and vesper services with her, ate with her and her presence was always felt. This was so even though there was the affable Ibuka sensei who was dormitory matron at that time. I always felt a great respect and a sense of awe and deference toward Kawai sensei. I can remember her gently chiding me and correcting my Tosa-ben I had learned from my Tosa-born parents and which I believed to be standard spoken Japanese. Also, leaving a lasting impression on me was sensei's insistence on using cloth napkins in individual napkin rings at the table. Each week's toban saw each of us laundering these napkins.

Life at Dai Ichi-ryō seemed less constrained, partly because there were more Nisei girls there, and because of Suzuki Kayo sensei's being there as dorm matron. She was soft-spoken, very gentle and very kindly in nature, and this fostered a wonderful climate of friendliness and warmth at Dai Ichi-ryō.

Keisen offered several areas of study, not only in the scholastic sense, but certainly studies that were veritable windows into the culture of Japan such as Japanese cooking, sewing, osaho, ohana and ochanoyu. I can still, after fifty some years, recall the wonderful teachers, the rooms, the shinken-na study efforts and also some lighter and humorous moments. One in particular was wondering what kind of okashi Taira sensei would bring for ochanoyu. The various field trips to places of historic and cultural interest are still fresh in my mind. There are places like the island of Oshima, Ise, Nikko and Chiba for clam digging to name a few.

To balance, perhaps, the scholastic side of my stay in Japan, there were the interpersonal relationships with different people. Each summer and winter vacation were spent in Kochi-ken where my parents came from before they emigrated to America. It was a contrast and change from the hustle and bustle life experienced in Tokio. The quiet rural life at Wajiki mura, Akano mura and Aki sh~~h~~ left me with indelible memories. It was good to meet and be with various cousins, aunts and uncles, but most of all I treasure the times spent with Ojiisan and Obaasan. I was now with next of kin, Tosa-ben included! The hot gohan and the fresh nasubi no tsukemono that Obaasan always served me are never to be forgotten. I can still remember how she would make my favorite ohagi for me specially and while waving off the flies with a fan, she would say, 'tabe, tabe, oishii desho'. Since Kochi-ken faces southward to the ocean, I can never forget the vast expanse of blue along the shoreline dotted by beautiful 'eda-buri no utsukushii' pine trees. This scene would change dramatically toward the end of summer vacation in late August with the 'nihyaku-toka' phenomenon that made the blue and white waves turn a menacing reddish-brown color and the energy of the waves became quite frightening. I can still hear the sound of the waves pounding the shoreline; what an awesome feeling and truly unforgettable. The people who lived in these rural areas were so kind, although I was often the object of curiosity because of my obvious American ways be it my gait, dress or hairdo. This combination of the more sophisticated city life and the slower-paced inaka life enabled me to see all of Japan at its very best. I think back now and know that Had I seen only one side and not the other, it would have been but half an education. I cannot recall a single unpleasant incident; how fortunate I was.

Getting back to Keisen and my impressions of those two precious years, I have thought many times about the three services that I was exposed to daily at Keisen. The first was the morning service at the dormitory, reading from the Hibi-no-Hikari book, singing a hymn and prayer which began the day. I can still see the steaming bowls of misoshiru on the dining room table. Then to school there would be an en masse gathering of students in the auditorium for a short service. Teachers took turns leading the service. I was particularly impressed by the selection of one hymn a week that we all sang while filing into the auditorium. I believe that there were about 450 students in all. Then the third and final service took place at the dormitory after supper. There is a saying, 'feast or famine', and it was verily a feast of daily devotions at Keisen!

Other impressions never to be forgotten were monthly 'kinro hoshi' activities, Keisen Day in November, the long walk to Kyodo eki, Sundays spent at the Matsuzawa church of Toyohiko Kagawa, how we bowed to the school custodian in the halls, the obento toban duties hauling a huge metal tray laden with lunch boxes from Dai Ichi-ryo and monthly Shin-wakai meetings. Of course I cannot miss mentioning the endless line of dedicated and beloved teachers like Yugeta sensei, Matsumoto sensei, Inui sensei, Wakagawa sensei, Chigira sensei, Kawai Hanako sensei,

Taira sensei and our beloved ^{Kawai} Michiko sensei.

I was fortunate to be able to spend the full two years at Keisen. However, after graduation I lost no time in making a quick departure in May 1944 on one of the last boats to travel over the Pacific to Seattle. I was safely back in Spokane with my family when the war broke out.

Memorable events that took place after that were marriage, two daughters, enrolling at the University of Washington at the age of 42, getting my degree in Education, teaching for 21 years and lastly, and the most profound, losing my beloved husband of 48 years to death in 1990.

The solid background in bunpo at Keisen proved to be a great asset as I was able to spend the last three years of my teaching career as a Japanese Language instructor with the Seattle Public Schools. How well I recalled those tedious classes in Japanese grammar with Yugata sensei. Also, what seemed long ago as a relentless exposure to daily devotions at Keisen, I believe they were instrumental in strengthening my youthful faith. The affects of those two years did not leave me; instead they stood by me shepherding me through life's calamities, both large and small.

Now, in 1994 at the age of nearly 75, I am a retired teacher, but not retired from life. I am keeping busy with activities that are open to senior citizens; sometimes there are so many things to do that I have to choose. Our Seattle Tomonokai also has interesting and worthwhile activities for the widowed persons. I have my church, access to the University of Washington for further study, all sorts of handwork and the piano and organ. These are the things that occupy my time and mind. But memories persist. I take great pride in my association with Keisen. She had given me a gift that I cherished through the years.

An essay of recollections of Keisen, submitted by Saji (Nishibue) Kanazawa
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