

Let Me Introduce Myself.

Kozi Asano

Hi, my name is Kozi Asano. I am from Himeji in Hyogo Prefecture. I was born there in 1961. I was the only child of my parents, Koichi and Miyoko Asano. My father passed away in 1993. My mother has been living at a nursing home since 1992. Both my parents are from Himeji. When I was an infant, we lived in a house. We had a small garden, and my parents grew vegetables such as eggplants, cucumbers and tomatoes there. We also had a fig tree. There was a small stream in front of our house, and we could net a lot of loach there in summer.

I remember several things from those days. First, I went to the funeral of my great grandfather. We used to eat sorrels together. Second, I had a girl friend who lived fairly close to our house. Actually there were only a few houses around. Third, I saw an ox plowing the rice field once. Fourth, we went to see a torchbearer of the Tokyo Olympics running on National Route 2, which was only a short distance from our home. It was in 1964, so I was three years old. Fifth, my mother was always frightened by a thunderbolt. I found it strange because I was not afraid of thunderbolts. Sixth, we did not have running water yet. Instead we had a well, and we had to pump water whenever we needed it. Seventh, our house was poorly constructed. Every typhoon meant a damage of the house. Eighth, we had no bath at home. So my mother and I went to a public bath everyday by walking a fairly long distance. My father took a bath at the factory where he worked. When we walked at night, I found it strange that the moon followed us. This is what I mean. At first the moon is on the left hand side of an electric pole, for example; but when we passed the pole, the moon, too, appeared on the right hand side of the pole. Did you not find it strange?

Anyway I entered an elementary school in 1967. When I was a second grader, we moved to an apartment closer to the school. But within 6 months there were two fires. One

was a big fire; it destroyed an entire apartment house in front of ours, and killed one old woman who lived there. The other one was small, but it took place next door to us. So my parents decided to leave the apartment, and we moved to a rather different part of Himeji. Thus I transferred to Arakawa Elementary School. What did I do in those days? I kept many pets at home, and at school we kept rabbits and ducks. I read comic books. I learned abacus. I started Judo, but I gave it up. I often played cardboard games with my friends, and we sometimes went fishing, too.

In 1973 I entered Sanyo Junior High School. I joined a gymnastics club; but since the practice was hard, I quitted the club. Although I was not an excellent student scholastically, I was serious and conscientious. I was thinking of improving the society through benevolent works. I read books on science, electrics, and military history. I made many plastic models of tanks, ships, and fighters. I also made many model planes which flew with rubbers for motors. Toward the end of my junior high school days I came to think that I could improve the society more effectively by becoming a statesman. Thus I began to study seriously to become a statesman.

I entered Tenri High School in Nara Prefecture in 1976. After becoming a high school student, I wondered what the good, which is to be realized in the society, is. Thinking that it is a subject worthy to devote my life, I decided to become a scholar to inquire what the good is. Thus I studied hard at high school. I also belonged to a speech club then.

I moved to Sendai to enter Tohoku University in 1979. I studied very hard there. I went to the United States to study at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in 1986. When I went there for the first time, La Jolla, where the school was located, seemed very wealthy and very beautiful. I tried to enjoy an American life as well as to study. In the first year, 1986-7, I had a fellowship from the Japanese Ministry of Education. (Tohoku University could send four students to the University of California and London University under its student exchange program each year.) In the second year I got a teaching

assistantship in Japanese from the Asian Studies Department at UCSD. Because the Philosophy Department there was not likely to give me financial aids, I looked for another graduate school which would give me financial aids so that I could survive in the United States.

Texas gave me financial aids. So I moved to Austin to study at the University of Texas in 1988. This was my third graduate school (the first was Tohoku University and the second was UCSD), so study was not difficult and I could enjoy a really American life. I lived in a cooperative house for two years, and a life with many undergraduate students there was quite enjoyable. I wrote a Master's thesis for the University of Texas in 1991, and became a Ph.D. candidate in the following year. I came back to Japan when my father passed away in 1993. I spent one year in Himeji before I moved to Kobe to teach English part-time at Hannan University. Later I picked up more part-time jobs at Kobe Gakuin University and Eichi University. While in Kobe, I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation. I sent it to the University of Texas, went there to defend it, and got my Ph.D. in 1997.

I got a job at Toyota Technological Institute (TTI) in 1999. I have been living in Nagoya since then. I teach Philosophy and English at my school. Students at TTI study hard, harder than most college students in Japan but not so hard as those in the United States.

I was good at sports when I was young; I was quick and I could run fast. But after I entered college, I did not exercise much. Thus I gradually put on my weight. After I came back to Japan, I began to exercise regularly. For the following several years my main exercise was swimming. Why swimming? When I was a first grader, I was saved from drowning in the sea. After that I was afraid of water. Fortunately Arakawa Elementary School had no pool, and there were not many swimming lessons at my junior high school or senior high school. So I could not swim for a long time. I learned to swim the breast stroke when I often went to a pool at Tohoku University in the summer break. I sometimes swam in the United States, too. However, the breast stroke does not look elegant; the crawl looks smarter. So when I began

swimming regularly in Japan, what I wanted to do was to swim the crawl. It took me several years to master the crawl, and I became confident of my crawl only a few years ago. When my interest in swimming decreased in Nagoya, I started aerobics, which was very interesting.

I began mountain trekking last year. I trekked in Tateyama and Hakuba, and climbed Ontake-san twice and Nishi-hotata-dake last year. I climbed Gozaisho-dake, Yari-ga-take, Haku-san, and Kiso-koma-ga-take, and trekked in Norikura-dake this year. The trip to Yari-ga-take with students of Wandervogel Club at TTI was very much enjoyable. I also began cycling last year. I bought a very nice road bike. With it I went to Lake Hamana, Sekigahara, Kameyama, Horai-cho, Asuke etc. The longest distance I have ever cycled is 123 km from my home in Tempaku-ku to Bentenjima of Lake Hamana via Route 301. That cycling took 7 hours. When I cycle, many motorbikes come from behind and pass me. I wonder why those guys are riding motorbikes: why do they not use their own body when they have a healthy body? What do you think?

In the future I want to walk the old Tokaido and Nakasendo from Tokyo to Kyoto. I also want to climb many more mountains before I die. If I were a college student again, I would cycle the entire Japan from Hokkaido to Okinawa.

What else do I like to do these days? I like Rakugo very much. It is a traditional comic storytelling in Japan. It is very, very interesting. If you have never listened to it, you should experience it.

If you have any question, come to my office to have a chat with me.