

# MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, November 2021

—Voices of the WGO? Staff and Members of the Volunteer Guide Seminar—

## November Nostalgia

**I like watching English educational TV programs.** One of my favorite programs is "Ota Hikari no tsubuyaki Eigo" which presents and discusses English language posts from the social media platform Twitter.

Watching this program, I can learn much about what people from all over the world are currently concerned with. In addition, the program features an English professor who teaches grammar through analyzing these Twitter comments. This way, I can learn about both English language and global trends. In the last program, I learned a new phrase that impressed me a lot. That is "Corona vacation". A woman used it in her tweet. She commented, "I started painting seriously during Corona vacation." I think the word "Corona vacation" is a very good expression. We tend to consider our current situation as a sad and difficult time. But if I have to stay home, I want to spend my time doing something that will brighten up my day. I found what she said very encouraging, and I've decided to use my Corona vacation for doing more exercise, something I've been avoiding!

What are you going to do on your Corona vacation?

**(Chiharu. I)**

**A couple of weeks ago, he invited me to Matsuyama Castle.**

"I'm doing a tour around the castle this morning. Why don't you come along?"

I was so excited because I'd never taken a Japanese language tour with a local guide. Mr. Takeda was back again after the pandemic. He is a bilingual, English/Japanese volunteer guide. Usually, his tour takes 2.5 hours, but he shaved off 30 minutes that morning because I had to go to my voice-training lesson. I have no idea how many times I've visited the castle, but this visit was absolutely special.

On the drill ground, he pointed out the tremendous view and talked about the observation platform he calls "*Seiun no Miharashi*". He believes that over the years, local young people have proclaimed their future dreams and goals from this spot. That's why he encourages all his clients to shout aloud their ambitions towards Tokyo. I should take our girls there next time! Returning to the castle tower, he led me to the original turrets along a path I'd never taken before. The zig-zag path along the stone wall spread out before me. They say that this stone wall is built on the same principles as the Great Wall of China. You can see this zig-zag path running along the south-side stone wall only at Matsuyama Castle. I fully understand why he is so popular among visitors. He is kind and super-friendly. He researches and updates his research regularly. He has a passion for Japanese castles! Thanks to him, I enjoyed being a tourist.

Why not have fun at Matsuyama Castle with an incredible navigator who'll guide you back 400 years? He never lets you get bored!

**(Kazuyo Kajiwara)**

## autumn wind—/ strolling around the quaint port town / in days long gone /

As I grow old, I am inclined toward looking back at my boyhood spent in Yawatahama. Over 70 years have passed since I left there.

One day, I decided to revisit my hometown once and for all and stroll around to see what remained of the town and people of days long gone. I lived in Yawatahama from the ages of two to fifteen. My life there can be divided into three stages.

### 1) The good old days before the outbreak of the Pacific War

Sometimes, my father took me fishing, while my grandma would go on a spree of mushroom picking. There were no children of about my age in the neighborhood except for the next-door girl, and we became good friends. But soon her family moved to Matsuyama, and I was alone again. So I tagged along with my grandma to the beaches to dig for shellfish and the hillsides to gather mountain herbs. She knew well what we could eat safely. Although she had dropped out of an elementary school and consequently was illiterate, she was canny and street-wise, having accumulated a lot of hands-on experience.

### 2) Before long, the Pacific war plunged these peaceful days into an abyss.

Worse still, my father contracted tuberculosis. As the tides of war turned against Japan, our personal lives became increasingly difficult. We were obliged to work a patch of barren land to grow food, while my mother, then in her thirties, went to remote villages to barter her kimonos for sweet potatoes. A cereal ration distributed by the government was totally inadequate. We were starving all year round.

### 3) Finally, after the self-proclaimed divine nation suffered total and devastating defeat, and in the wake of frantically bustling activity driven by hunger, the black market started. The vicissitudes brought about a sea change in people's sense of values, roughly put, from spiritualism to inveterate materialism.

Over 70 years have passed since those days, but, upon reflection, this quaint port town did mold the fundamentals of my entity. Those days long gone will never return which makes them golden indeed. (H. Tarumi)

**This autumn, I visited Yawatahama's historic district** and saw one of the town's landmarks, Toyobo Company, Ltd.'s warehouse, where, I was told, my great grandparents encountered each other for the first time. From the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century, this small town was a prosperous port for both textile manufacturing and copper industry. Toyobo grew to be the world's largest textile company. One of their factories was located in Yawatahama. The very first electric generators on Shikoku were installed at this factory.

The massive red brick warehouse retains an antique atmosphere and conjures up nostalgic visions of early-twentieth century Japan. But a little piece of red brick I picked up speaks to me even more. My great-grandfather was born in Yokohama, into a family that were once members of the samurai class. Around 1909, he was sent to the Toyobo factory to inspect the spinning machines, and he

happened to fall in love with a woman he met working there. The fact is, he was already married. The details of their relationship remain somewhat of a family secret. But the mystery made my visit to their meeting place even more intriguing. While strolling around town, I felt as though all the landscape was waving with intense vibrations, and I felt as if I was traveling back in time. In the little red-brick alley, I heard the couple's voices. I followed them, passing by a Western-style gabled house. I watched as their auras slowly crossed over the Minasebashi cypress bridge, drifting along the riverside walk.

Soon after they met, their first baby, my grandmother was born, but she was given to a family with no children, delivered along with my great grandfather's sword and dagger. After the child was safely with her new parents, the couple left for Yokohama. There, another child was born.

My great-grandfather, great-grandmother and their second child visited the girl in 1920 when she was around 10 years old. They probably traveled there by ship to see her. She believed that these visitors were distant relatives and that the people who raised her were her actual mother and father. Much later, even though she somehow learned she had been adopted, she still didn't know she had a sister in Yokohama. Yet, my grandmother kept a photo that was taken on that visit. And her sister in Yokohama had exactly the same picture, proof of their family connection. My grandmother had no sisters or brothers in her adopted family, so when she met the man who would become her husband, he was her entire world, and she loved him deeply.

As the shadows of my great-grandfather and great-grandmother disappeared in the twilight, I could hear one of them whisper a single answer to all my unspoken questions. "Because we could not help falling in love." (Miwa N.)