

MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, October 2022

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

Looking Forward, Looking Back

In early September, I went hiking with a friend to Mt. Saragamine. It was a hot day, but once we climbed up the mountain a ways, we forgot about the heat. The fresh breeze shaking the green leaves through the trees cooled us in an instant. We took our time there and enjoyed the early autumn flowers and grasses.

I found many green acorns scattered on the mountain path. Green acorns look so soft and beautiful. Wondering what they were, I decided to take some home and examine them.

I looked up what they were on the Internet and found out that the green acorns were the work of an insect called the *haiirochokkiri*. About 1 cm in length, *haiirochokkiri* lays its eggs on acorns from *konara* and *kunugi* (sawtooth oak) trees. The insects use their sharp jaws to drill holes in the acorns and when they are done, lay eggs there. Their name is derived from the fact they gnaw off the twigs from which the acorn grows. It takes about three hours from the time they lay eggs to the time the acorn falls to the forest floor. They are said to lay eggs while the acorns are soft, and they gnaw off the twigs so that the acorns do not become hard.

The acorn I brought home also had a small black hole in it. The green acorns that fell were cradles lovingly made by the *haiirochokkiri*.

(Hiroko.T)

This society has complicated problems with ambiguous solutions.

By this time of year many senior year students are supposed to have acquired at least one offer of employment, though this is not the case with my son. He hasn't gotten any offers yet.

When he started his university life, he was very motivated, but soon Covid-19 deprived him of the chance to learn directly on campus, in classes and during fieldwork.

His fear of being infected by the virus gradually undermined his physical condition and caused a phobia. He had the vague notion that either the vaccine or virus itself would damage his body. He had to go see both medical doctors and counselors in the midst of job hunting. He seems to understand that choosing an occupation is one of his most crucial life decisions, still he couldn't interview effectively. He has pride and does not want to compromise his career choice, still he cannot have confidence in himself.

Though he's not so bad at answering multiple choice quizzes, Japan's exam-oriented education might have made it hard for him to focus his interests. It is one thing to score points on tests and academic reports, and quite another to find a suitable job.

I want him to be more confident of his abilities and make use of them as much as possible.

I can't describe how much the result of his job interviews disappointed his father. Some of our acquaintances are being nosy about whether he has decided his career, which makes us feel frustrated and sad. But if you worry too much about other people's opinions, you will not enjoy your life. You are working for yourself, not to fulfill others' expectations. "You were too slow in arranging job interviews!" Such negative words won't help him at all, but hurt his confidence.

Instead I said to him, "You being you is good." "It's your life, not someone else's. You cannot compare yourself with your friends. The only thing you can compare is yourself yesterday to yourself today." Looking back, I've never said "No" to him when it came to what schools to go to or whatever activities he wanted to pursue. My way of raising children might be wrong, but at any rate, all I can do is to believe in him.

Life is too short to enjoy yourself fully. Someday he will find out what he wants to do.

(Miwa N.)

Shinto, Buddhism, archery, martial arts, aromas, tea ceremony, flower arrangement, calligraphy. What else? Am I missing something with the “道” (*DO*)? There are a lot of words containing *DO* around us but I can't describe what exactly *DO* is.

In my girlhood, I practiced *Shodo*, Japanese brush calligraphy, at a temple. My mother took me to the lessons because my penmanship was terrible. And beyond that, she believed I would learn good manners from the priest.

In the post-war era, concerned about that Shinto teachings would result in the remilitarization of Japan, GHQ Occupation Headquarters prohibited the teaching in schools any subjects and traditional activities identified with *DO*. That's why, for a while, Kendo, Judo, and even Shodo calligraphy were removed from school curriculums in this country.

Times changed and these subjects were eventually reinstated. Our two girls took Judo lessons in P.E. class in middle school. Also, Shodo survived as a school subject by changing its name to *Kakikata*, or *Shosha* handwriting.

At the grade school where I work, kids learn how to wield a calligraphy brush in their classroom by watching a video. I take out the old calligraphy set my dad and the girls once used. An old ink stone well, India ink sticks, a felt mat for *hanshi* paper, and a paperweight.

On serene autumn nights, I turn down the radio and carefully read the text and take a deep breath. The old ink sticks remind me of something my master always suggested: Rub the stick for five more minutes to make the ink darker.

With a new brush, I practice writing, copying model passages from *Kusamakura*, a great novel written by N. Soseki. But, it's far more difficult to master his philosophy, "Selfless devotion to justice".

(Kazuyo Kajiwara)