

MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, August 2023

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

August: Young and Old

Our girls will be having a hot but shivery summer this August.

The younger one signed up for a seminar on social medicine hosted by Hygiene and Public Health Education in Japan. With medical students from all over the country, she will join a workshop at Kyoto University and stay at Chion-in Temple adjacent to the campus.

It sounds like a good introduction to epidemic studies and preventive medicine. Moreover, the seminar includes morning services led by the monks and sightseeing at Gozan no Okuribi, bonfires at six locations on 8/16.

It's Kyoto's most popular late summer event. An enormous "大" daimonji character on a mountainside is set afire by monks from Ginkakuji temple at 8 pm. Five more bonfires are lit every 5 minutes afterwards. I wish I could make it to this event too.

Another daughter, now a resident surgeon, has been working by herself at a hospital in a remote area close to Kochi for three months this summer.

At the welcoming party held for her, she found that there were no other female physicians, and most of the doctors lived there by themselves on weekdays apart from their families back in Matsuyama.

An old, musty doctor's apartment, currently occupied by a family of snails, looked spooky enough. But the nurses and physicians also shared scary stories about the hospital. Doctors waking at night to a baby's crying or the weeping of a woman patient from one of the vacant rooms upstairs.

An old stone Buddhist statue from across the road is said to materialize in apartment kitchens in the building.

Ok, enough! Let me book a hotel to visit her and enjoy fresh oysters and bonito!

(Kazuyo Kajiwara)

Life is too short to be anything but happy. It'd be great if those who attained an advanced age could also live life to the fullest.

Fortunately, I have someone I can consult with about problems faced by seniors in my family.

Two months ago, my mother-in-law, now in her eighties, was hospitalized due to a lung function disorder. Undergoing treatment and rehabilitation, she gradually returned to normal blood oxygen levels even without an oxygen inhaler, and she finally came back home.

Since she has been suffering from senile dementia, after she was discharged from the hospital, they introduced us to Community Comprehensive Support Center for consultation and advice.

The other day, a public health nurse visited my mother-in-law and asked if she had any problems.

She has not been going to the senior citizen's daycare center where she enjoyed ping-pong and other activities with lifelong friends every week. She is disappointed that she may not join the social gathering any longer and everyday asks her husband if she can go there.

Ms. U, the public health nurse looked into her confused eyes and listened to her concerns. Then she softly said to me, "Your mother-in-law looks fine except for the dementia symptoms. She is supposed to be examined by the Matsuyama City Council of Social Welfare to get Long-Term Care certification next week." "Once they allow her requirement for nursing care, she won't be able to

attend the previous daycare which only healthy elderly people can use." "If she hopes to prioritize her friendships, she can cancel the consultation with the city council, and continue to participate in activities with friends as before." "Even so, she can go through qualification screening for nursing care in case she needs it in the future. If she decides to take advantage of this at this time, she can receive benefits from Senior Care Insurance and still go to a new daycare facility." "So I'd like you to think about this with her and choose the best way for her. If you have any questions, I'll talk to you anytime."

I was so impressed by Ms. U's understanding of the problems and feelings of the aged. I hadn't thought there would be such an exception to the procedure of applying for Certification of Needed Long-Term Care.

Her empathy and thoughtful way of talking eased my anxiety. She added that she would even accompany us if we had a meeting with the council staff. I'm proud that our community has such support staff for the elderly that respects senior citizens' wishes and encourages their independent lifestyles.

I appreciate Japan's excellent welfare services because I think the importance of a person's ability to live a healthy and fulfilling life is immeasurable.

(Miwa N.)