

# MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, April 2024

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

## Spring Spirits

Did you know there is a stone monument on a horseshoe-shaped pedestal near the Ehime Prefectural War Memorial Tower? This cenotaph enshrines the spirits of 700,000 horses, dogs and other animals drafted into the military and serving on the battlefields of the Pacific War.

From 1938 to 1940, my late grandfather was a cavalryman in Manchuria. In his 90s, he recalled that his horse was a smart one. Horses were still indispensable to armies during World War II.

Cavalry soldiers had excellent mobility in a landscape that often defeated motorized vehicles. Mounted troops were capable of reconnaissance, surprise attacks, raids and other maneuvers. The cavalry played such an important role in warfare that it could influence the course of a battle.

Dogs, too, performed a lot of tasks on the battlefield.

German shepherds have a powerful sense of smell and hearing. These war dogs could find the enemy in the dark and attack them. They carried supplies, rescued wounded soldiers, detected land mines and did other dangerous work that humans could not do. When there was a risk of the enemy intercepting and decoding radio waves, carrier pigeons sent messages.

However, when the war ended, most of the surviving animals had no place on the demobilization ships, and they could not return to Japan.

Although they pledged loyalty to humans, they ultimately were betrayed by the people they served. These military animals could not protest their fate, nor could they live out their natural lives. For example, according to the book, *The Great Repatriation of Japanese Captives Who Invaded the People's Republic of China*, there is an anecdote about the Chinese Nationalist Kuomintang army. After the war, they confiscated Japanese military dogs and tried to retrain them. However, the dogs hadn't been trained to surrender, so they disobeyed commands other than those of the Japanese. Finally, the animals were judged to be useless and many were eaten.

Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo enshrines the spirits of military dogs, horses, and pigeons. A memorial service for deceased animals is held every year in April.

Here in Matsuyama, although the military animal monument was restored in June of last year, I don't think most people know about it.

You can find the cenotaph on the way to the Matsuyama City Archaeological Museum.

The cherry blossoms near the monument are now blooming as if to honor the animals' sacrifice.

(Miwa N.)

"Hello, may we come in with shoes on?"

The wooden floor looked very well-polished, and so opening the sliding door of an antique café, I asked the nice-looking, elderly man.

"Of course, thanks for coming!" His young, friendly voice welcomed my husband and I one nippy Saturday afternoon last February.

His bowler hat, neat shirt, white jeans and every other single fashion item looked great on him.

He'd opened his café in this kominka, an old Japanese house originally built over 100 years ago located in the Historic District Preservation Zone of Uchiko.

Just a few weeks before, I'd enjoyed reading the serial story of "Denjiro's Café" in the Asahi Shinbun newspaper, and that reminded me of why Kazuko had pushed me to go see Denjiro-san.

Kazuko is a friend of mine who's been an enthusiastic local volunteer tour guide for many years in Uchiko.

With Bob Dylan records playing in the background, we ordered matcha Japanese tea with wagashi sweets, coffee and homemade angel food cake.

As a former professional in import/export, Denjiro-san had been stationed with his family in New York City, London, and Dusseldorf.

Those were the days of "Japan No.1". No doubt this corporate warrior worked very hard, but cared nothing for his family. In 1990, his wife passed away at 45 years old.

After retirement, Denjiro-san taught economics at a university, but he came back to Ehime 12 years ago.

During our conversation, he brought a dish of almonds and chocolate for us to eat.

For 50 years, he's been a big fan of Bob Dylan since attending the singer/songwriter's concert at Brown University in the '70s. Finally, last June, he made it to Osaka for Dylan's concert again.

I told him that we'd driven to Duluth, Dylan's hometown when we lived in Minnesota.

I look forward to visiting his café again to listen to more stories during the spring break.

(Kay Kajiwara)