

MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, June 2024

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

June Bon Voyage

I met some tourists from the U.S. State of Massachusetts at Matsuyama Castle recently.
On the spot, she wrote this haiku and passed it to me.

castle fortress
overlooking the city
Ferris wheel

Ms. Denise Fontaine-Pincince knew Matsuyama was the mecca of modern haiku. And so on her first trip to Japan, the first place she chose to visit was Shiki Museum. Masaoka Shiki is a master of modern haiku.

I've been to Massachusetts, and my mother loves to compose haiku, so Denise and I got to know each other, and we started exchanging e-mail.

Until I learned about her work, I didn't know that haiku was so popular overseas. Denise is a famous haiku and verse poet. She teaches art through haiku at elementary schools and proselytizes haiku on YouTube: "Haiku Gifts: Art with Poetry".

Watching her video, I was drawn to the world she had created combining English haiku with original, evocative art pieces.

Haiku is simple and short so that people can instantly picture what the writer intended, the scenes she saw and things she experienced. Because of this, I think haiku has a universal appeal.

However, since there is a basic rule that Japanese haiku should have seventeen syllables, it is difficult to translate foreign language haiku into Japanese.

I tried to translate one of her latest haiku in Japanese.

seventy-
for the first time
spring
古稀過ぎて
初めて知るや
春の色
koki sugite
hajimete shiruya
haru no iro

Driving in her car, she felt as though she had never seen the colors of the countryside look so beautiful, and it inspired her to write the haiku.

Since meeting Denise, I have had more opportunities to talk about haiku with my mother.

My mom sometimes asks me to look through her work before she submits it to her haiku gathering or haiku collection. The other day, I asked her if she could improve my translation. She said it was okay, but she had an interesting reaction, "Does she have seasons like Japan's in the States?"

She seemed to be trying to imagine a poet she had never met.

I will introduce my mother's haiku and my English translation to Denise next time. My mother

composed this at Bansuiso in Matsuyama and received an award at a memorial ceremony held for Masaoka Shiki.

万緑や
俳都に映ゆる
人力車

banryokuya

haito ni hayuru

jinrikisha

myriad green leaves

rickshaw looks striking

haiku kingdom

(Miwa N.)

“Why on earth is the yen becoming so cheap?”

Our daughter griped over and over again in her texts to us. She bought a small amount of US dollars on the Internet @160 JPY. There was no need to compare exchange rates in the past.

As a medical student, she studied at the University in Bangkok and the University Hospital in Prague, and also had an internship at the Environmental Protection Agency in North Carolina.

However, COVID-19 had deprived her of all opportunities for studying overseas and attending international conferences.

After the pandemic was over, the senior ER resident had been sitting on the fence as to whether to send someone to participate in a specific meeting in the U.S. This because of the weak yen. The yen's depreciation makes overseas travel too expensive. But she finally signed up for an annual conference held in June in Florida.

Her boss negotiated with the hospital administration to secure the budget for international travel expenses and an \$800 admission fee for the youngest doctor on his team. And thanks to his efforts, she'll be able to attend.

25 years ago, because of my husband's AHA meeting, our family visited Orlando. We had plenty of time to take our little girl to NASA and Disneyworld. This time, she'll spend only five days cooped up at Palm Beach, Florida in order to focus on the four-day meeting.

I have no idea how she'll manage her tight schedule.

I just hope everything goes well with her journeying alone to Miami via Dallas, although she has gained a lot of experience traveling to Chicago before, especially on how to deal with all the hassles of travel these days, flight delays, cancellations, and security checks.

No more unique experiences than what she had at O'Hare Airport eight years ago!

I'll keep my fingers crossed for her safe return home.

(Kay)