

I worked with Japan Study at Waseda University as a Program Associate (PA) almost half a century ago, from April 1967 to August 1971, and was deeply involved with four groups of students and Resident Directors and their families. Now the faces of many students, and scenes or incidents with them, come to my mind in succession.

When I inherited the job from Kakegawa-san, the first PA, the basic structure of the program was already established. All I needed to do was follow a well paved path. There was a two-month summer program before the academic program started at Wasada in September: a weeklong orientation in Tokyo after the students arrived in early July, when they met their Tokyo host families for the first time; Japanese language workshops for two weeks in July and August, each at Kinenkan Sanso, a Japanese inn with a hot spring in Ikenodiara at the foot of the 2,454 meter-high Mount Myoko in Niigata Prefecture; a three-week farm experience staying with farm families in various parts of the country (who were members of the Settlers' Union, an organization of repatriates from Manchuria and other prewar and wartime Japanese colonies) and the last 10 or so days comprised of individual trips. Thus the students had an initial Japan experience with rich and varied content. What interested me the most, among many other aspects, were the changes and growth most of the students went through during their stay in Japan. I saw a certain pattern there. In the beginning they were so excited and enjoyed everything, more or less a period of infatuation. Then came a period when they began to notice and be bothered by differences, getting depressed or disliking Japan. After overcoming this phase they would come to terms with and accept the differences. This process was the fruit of Japan Study, which allowed students to deeply immerse themselves in Japanese life, living with Japanese families and commuting on crowded trains, for a full year. Here is a small episode: A student who helped me prepare for the new arrivals advised me to serve sushi during the orientation. He had been unable to eat it a year earlier. "I'm sure many of them won't eat sushi so we can treat ourselves," was what he said.

From another perspective I enjoyed noticing differences in the students from year to year. It was a period when the United States had begun its massive involvement in the Vietnam War.

What greeted the students when they stepped onto the Wasada campus was a forest of signboards with slogans such as “Ampo funsai!” (Do away with the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty!) or “Nittei, beitei dato!” (Down with Japanese and American imperialism!). Japanese students in the antiwar movement wrote these slogans in big letters.

Many of my first-year students reacted aggressively against the Japanese students' accusations of the United States as imperialist, adhering to the textbook-type idea that the Vietnam War was a sacred war to protect democracy. The second-year students, however, took a more apologetic attitude toward the policies of their own country. The Kent State incident occurred when the third-year group was in Tokyo, and four students had been shot to death by Ohio National Guardsmen. Students of the Waseda International Division boycotted their classes to express their solidarity with the struggling students at home. Some students in my fourth group joined the peace movement in Tokyo or even worked to help counsel military personnel at the U.S. bases in Japan. I may be doing too much stereotyping of the students in my observations, but in those years I felt as if I could see what was happening in the United States by watching my students in Japan. My work with the students was hard but very rewarding and it helped me, too, to learn and grow.

Various memories come back one after another, but I cannot help but mention Jack Bailey from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, who was instrumental in setting up Japan Study. I used to call him a “typhoon.” Luckily for me, during my first year with the program he took a sabbatical from Earlham and stayed in Kyoto with his family. Afterwards “Typhoon Richmond” flew to Japan once or twice a year. During his short visits he traveled around nonstop to meet many people, putting various ideas into reality. On the way to the airport he would leave me with a lot of homework. He was a gentle but very energetic person, and people often worried that he might drop dead from a heart attack. We never imagined that he would die from cancer and so soon (1996). It makes me so sad and sorry that the person who would have been most happy to see the fiftieth anniversary of the program is not here.

*The 50th Anniversary Book, GLCA (Great Lakes Colleges Asso. Consortium)*