

Part 2
A-bomb led me as an independent technician
(3)
Championship in English Speech contest

I entered in the world of technicians at the age of fourteen. I began to attend nighttime high school while working at daytime. As I mentioned earlier, I used to walk on my mother's back, who walked to the rhythm of "left, right, left, right" in a clear right pronunciation of English she used to learn in her childhood in Hawaii where she was born.

In my high school days, she used to tell me when I study or read English I should read it aloud. When I make it in a wrong way, she stopped me saying, "Oh, no, no! This way...". This is how I learned how to pronounce English. The school teacher's English was so terrible that I used to read far ahead of the text book.

I used to tell myself that I could never go to college but instead, I would come to be able to speak it in real living and native-like way that those graduates never imitate me. Through my own experience I learned that real living English is made only by reading it aloud, which invites right pronunciation, intonation and accent incentive.

In the mean time, I was given a chance to take part in the inter high school English speech contest for Hiroshima prefecture. It was the first one ever held before and after the war. There was no encouragement of learning English among school authorities nor among the whole nation simply for reason that English was the enemy's language. After the war, however, it turned to be the opposite among the whole nations.

The title of my speech was "How I've fought my way out." I inserted the phrase I read in the Helen Keller's book "My Day", which wrote, "The physical adversity is the greatest opportunity for spiritual advancement for which we should be truly grateful to God."

The judges were Professor Iida of Hiroshima University and Mrs. Macshery, a Canadian missionary. I was told that the hot discussion was made between the two as to which should be the first winner, me or the girl student of the mission school where real living English was taught by American teachers.

The first prize came to me after all. Mrs. MacSherry was said to stand so strong on my side. The girl student, Miss Kumagai, was a daughter of a Christian priest.

After the commendation ceremony, an American missionary, Miss Myra Anderson, came to me accompanied with her student and said, "Congratulations, Mr. Yoshida. Let

me introduce my student, Miss Yoshino Murakami...”

Years later, Miss Anderson and Yoshino came into my life to play very important role which I need to write before I go on to the next section of my story. Let me insert something new here, dating forward up to the recent time.

It was on April 2005 when I was 73 of age, a publishing company in Tokyo, Bungeisha, opened an “Essay contest” under the title of “First love, First boy, First girl”. The applicants were 717 writers, ranging from teenagers up to eightieth. The awards given were 55 works, including the grand prize and four semi prize and 50 fine works. My essay got the fine prize! The book was published on April 30, 2005 with 369-page.

As mentioned, I could hardly go on with my life story without telling about these two ladies who played a great deal of influence on my life thereafter. The below is the English translation of my prized essay. Please read it.

Essay contest title; “First love, first boy, first girl”

Prized as “Fine works”

“The benefactor of my life

Eternal girl friend whom I loved platonic”

by Yuuki Yoshida, Hiroshima, born in 1931

As a man of 73, trying to be able to call myself “Eternal Youth”, look back my life with good memories and never forgettable and that nothing could be achieved without the presence of this person , I would like to write a short story about my girl friend, diseased Miss Yoshino Murakami, with my sincere heart of thanks to her soul, telling how I met her and how I was encouraged by her. The time slips more than a half century.

I was stricken with polio ten months after my birth. Buried under the collapsed building by the a-bomb, I got deep cuts in my face but nearly escaped from death. The year next I lost my father by accident while working. As the eldest son of the family, I began to work as a “band-saw filer” in the saw-mill which was under the management of my brother-in-law, who encouraged me better to make a way to be independent in living as the first priority. I became a disciple under a famous technician in the field. With my dexterous by nature, I succeeded in mastering the techniques in a short period of time, succeeded in becoming independent.

I gave up making higher education in university for my responsibility to the family to take care of them as the eldest son. However, as far as the English language ability

is concerned, I told myself I would never fall behind those who study it in university.

It was in the age when I was working while studying at nighttime high school. I took part in the first English speech contest for inter high school in Hiroshima prefecture. I spoke on the title of “How I’ve fought my way out”, telling my determination to make a living overcoming my physical adversity.

I defeated even a girl student of Hiroshima Mission school, which produce many students good at English under native English speaking teachers. I was confident in pronunciation and performance but most of all contents did capture the judges.

The judges were a professor of Hiroshima University and a Canadian missionary. Later days I was told that the latter stood strong to me for the first prize.

After the commendation ceremony, an American missionary, Miss Anderson, came to me accompanied with her student and said with tender smile by shaking hands, “Congratulations, Mr. Yoshida!” She then introduced her student to me. It was nobody but Miss Yoshino Murakami, whom I first met. In the second contest the year next, I spoke as a model speaker and the first winner was nobody but she. She spoke under the title of “UNESCO, as a peace movement”.

We happened to have our younger brothers who are in the same class of high school attached Hiroshima university. My brother, Yuuji and hers Suminao. An interesting thing began. Both of us were so eager to study English that we began to correspond each other in English and we used our brothers as the messenger to exchange letters in their classroom. “Hey Yuuji, give it to Suminao (Yosino’s brother)” was the way. The unforgettable thing about our letters were that we wrote such big theme as “what do you think of the Japanese rearmament?” or the like.

Though the story goes back and forth, Yoshino’s father was then professor of astronomy in Hiroshima university. Later years, he became the president of Hiroshima Jogakuin College. Years after Yoshino diseased, he showed me an armful of letters to say, “Your letters addressed to Yoshino have been kept so much. You want to read them?” I became bashful, saying “Oh no, please!”

Here, I would like to write about our romance of the youth. My first love was platonic love story. Our association began with our participation to the English speech contest and introduction made by Miss Anderson.

It was real pure and innocent. This is the reason why I could write the story with real name.

In those days, I was a young man going on straight in my life as a professional technician. With my ability of the English language and fervent passion for learning, I was looking for a book of my profession in the American CIE Library, later years called "American Culture Center". So much precious accomplishments occur later years but write it later.

Therefore we used to correspond each other so often and even used to have a date with movie going, one of which in clear memory was "Rio Grande" starred by John Wayne. The movie theater was so crowded. We stood behind the seats. As soon as the one shot finished, Yoshino ran into the seats and occupied our seats, waving her hand to me. She was so kind hearted to me a crippled boy.

On my 20th birthday, I invited her together with a dozen friends of mine to our home. After the party was over, I rode her back on my bicycle to her home some five kilometer. Yoshino then was supposed to study in America (Mt. Union College, Ohio) after graduation from her high school.

An unforgettable thing about our conversation while my riding bicycle hard with her in the back was that she said to me, "At the time I come back to Japan, I would be an old woman...". The only thing I could say was, "Oh no! Don't say that sad words!".

The thought that hit my heart at that time on the bicycle was that "At the time when Yoshino comes back to Japan, she would be such a woman as to be praised as one the greatest woman in Japan. If I ever stay as I am now, I would be a man not worthy of her. OK, I'll do my best so that I could be good enough to continue being her friend of worthy." That was my will power and that has built what I am.

When I sent her home, her father came out the front room saying friendly, "Oh thanks for taking care of my daughter." While Yoshino urging me to wait for a moment dashed her room and brought with her a big book as a present. It was the Old and New Testaments, in the first page written with her own pen "As a token of my friendship".

Soon she left for America. Our correspondence spontaneously ceased only to hear about her hard work in her life and the college from her brother and others. She got married with a fellow classmate American and had a baby boy.

Whereas I was eager with stimulus and motivation that I was given by Yoshino, to develop my profession as good as to develop it to be independent with technological advancement. The before mentioned American Cultural Center gave me coincidentally a great opportunity of my finding out an American big book "LUMBER". This book gave me a big impact with full of new epoch making development and mission.

I those days what was known as impossible in this field of technology was already in practice in the United States. One of them was oxyacetylene welding of band-saw. I succeeded in importing this new technique through correspondence with many American fellow technicians and a manufacturing company engineers.

Later years I invented some devices and together with this new technology of welding, I began to travel throughout the country for lecturing and demonstration of new devices and gas welding. My youth life thus flourished.

While Yoshino studying in America, I happened to meet her junior student of English literature of Jogakuin University, and married, though divorced after thirty years. Yoshino's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Murakami, played the official "go-between" for our marriage. They have been diseased, though.

I have an episode about Yoshino's temporary coming back to Japan. I went to the station to see the couple. Her husband Bob came to me shaking hands said, "I know you used to be my wife's boy friend!" I knew that Yoshino told him about me! This is something that I still have in my mind with pride and good memory about us especially her deep thought of me

Yoshino died young by cancer probably caused by her hard work both in spirit and body. Inher home town of Hiroshima, her family's church held a memorial prayer meeting and I was asked by her parents to speak as Yoshino's friend representative. With no written message, I humbly expressed what in my mind as her friend. I said, "She has played and existed in all of my life as an unforgettable and irreplaceable person. She will live in my heart in all walks of my life to the end."

I am now proud of myself for being able to say that I now exist because of my meeting with Yoshino, the most precious person in my life. I have a manuscript of "autobiography" written as of now to some 220 page in the form of a book, being obliged to write ahead for my busy days. In its part two, I describe something about those dear memories about her.

My present wife (cohabitant) understands quite well that I bring this dear memory of her to my grave. The English phrase “Try to learn as if you were to live forever and live as if you were to die tomorrow.” is the one that I and Yoshino in Heaven still keep in mutuality.