

Part 4
The third stage of my life as business consultant
(6-Story 10)
Last day with General Colin Powel's speech &
Meeting with a man I longed for

The memorial speech after the general assembly meeting of ATA was made by the then spotlighted General Colin Powel, who became famous by the first Gulf War, later became the Secretary of States. The opening ceremony was dramatic, especially to the eyes of a Japanese like me. The flag bearers of the Army, the Marin and the Air forces marched into the hall on the stage with the national anthem, while all the attendants welcomed in standing postures with their faces moving toward the flag bearers.

The national anthem with their singing voices sounded so beautiful in bracing air. I sang it because I memorized it from young hood.

The appearance of the General Powel in public was said to be the first ever since he retired from his public service as the Secretary of States and the Chief of the General Staff Office in September 1993. For me, it was only a month before my visit to this country. I was the first Japanese who ever sit in such a memorial occasion.

He spoke under the title of "Management under the Risk and Change" I accepted it as his sharp insight towards the changing age. His speech with no text was full of charming and sharp notification, and more than anything else, the way he talked made me feel that he was a man of modesty and the highest intelligence.

He answered the questions raised from among the attendants in politeness. When asked, "General, there are voices calling for your running the Presidency...", he politely answered in a way his remarks made the audience smile and satisfied. However, it would be better not to write what his remarks were, lest I should translate in a wrong way.

When the General (even after he retired, people call him so) leaves the hall, the audience stood up and paid respect with big applause. This sort of manner and custom is something the Japanese are not accustomed in the international stage for which we should learn and practice in the Japanese society, I think.

I had another and the last dramatic and highlighted experience in this ATA conference and that on the last day and in the last program, that is, the lunch time. It was that I could meet one of the top business men in the American trucking industry named Mr. Brian C. Kinsey, the Vice President of Landstar System, Inc. Let me tell something

about the company before what it was like.

Landstar was the one I long had a big mark in the target of my investigation visit. The company is well known among truckers as having the biggest number of the owner operators under the contract agreement. The number of the contracted owner operators I had learned from publication was some 7000.

In order that I may have a contact with someone from Landstar, whenever I meet people during the convention, I used to ask them when they ever meet the Landstar person, be sure to tell him that I am longing to see him.

It was in the lunch time, the last meeting for the convention schedule, I sat to the table alone early, and in the mean time a handsome young man approached and sat beside me. Slowly, he took out his business card trying to introduce himself to me, saying that he saw me walking into the room. I immediately noticed that he knew me by the way I walked. The people whom I met and asked during the convention about the Landstar man, knew that I am crippled. So, when they told him about me, it was probable that they told him of my physical feature, which often play my identification and presence in the public.

Now back to the lunch table with the man beside me, I received his card first, and took a look at it. Believe it or not, it wrote "Brian C. Kinsey, the Vice President, Landstar, Inc.!" I spontaneously cried out, "Well, well, I feel as if I met a sweetheart I longed to see so much!" We laughed and joined hands firmly. It was after that that I slowly gave him my business card.

With a smile in his face, he began to talk, "So many people told me that someone Japanese is longing to see me, and each time I thought they were cheating me. Oh, it's been a real story."

I told him about everything in short, especially my wish to visit his company during my stay in Florida, but too late to make it to my regret. He showed deep interest in me and promised that he will send necessary materials to me at the time I return to Japan, and he did it later days to my joy and expectation. The papers he sent me later days made me able to use them for the good information, which I used for my lecture and writing activities. The owner operators under the contract agreement reached to some 9000, I was told.

Only half an hour of talk with the man, I longed so much to see, ended so quickly as my shuttle bus for the airport was waiting.

According the big amount of the materials he sent me later days, his company has its own truck driver school and financial supports to the contractors for buying trucks, fuel,

tires and other consumables.

The most interesting thing was the “Subcontractor Agreement” between the company and the owner operators. We Japanese call American business society “the contract society”, partly because we do not usually have such strict contract with the one we deal in business. Most of the businesses between the contractor and the subcontractor in the Japanese trucking industry are made by the talk. Japanese work on the same wave length, so to speak, but sometimes we are liable to be in trouble on whether you promised or not with nothing to prove. Laugh

Years later, I happened read in the ATA magazine, Transport Topics, about his leaving the company to establish his own. I sent him an e-mail for encouragement. He seemed so happy. We met at the time the internet, especially the email, was just to start soon.