

Part 4
The third stage of my life as business consultant
(6-Story 16)
The last visiting place, California from south to north

I landed on at the Los Angeles airport the first time for five years. I notice a new road from the airport to the town was built. In the taxi, I tried to speak to the operator, but he seemed not likely to respond with the exception that he is an owner operator. I kept silent in my way to the hotel, enjoying the seminary of the town.

In the hotel room, I tried to call my friends whom I met during my trip here. Some of them seemed surprised saying, "Oh, you are still in this country? Great!" One of them was the American, whom I happened to meet and talk in the train to New York, whose father was polio. He promised me that he would ask his father try to look for the polio stricken lady, Mrs. Ann Adams through the polio people organization he belongs. When I called him, he was absent so that I recorded in his phone that I came to know that she had been dead.

Los Angeles is familiar to us Japanese. Japan is across over the Pacific Ocean. This made me feel as if I was so close to my home country. I saw many Japanese honeymooners in the hotel lobby. In the restaurant, I enjoyed beefsteak with California wine. I told myself to spend the week there in a relaxed mood.

The morning next, I read Nikkei newspaper for the first time ever since I left Japan. There came a Japanese just-married couple at a table beside me. The husband, seeing the menu, whispered to her wife in Japanese, "Can't read at all". Then suddenly, the wife opened her mouth with big voice and shouted in pure Japanese pronunciation, "Boy, wo ta! (water)" The customer people turned their faces toward her with scowling look. Her rude manner was frowned on by the surroundings. I felt as if their faces are turned to me and I was very bashful as a Japanese. The waiter, passing by nodding, did not change his face as the professionals. If only she added the Japanese pronunciation of "puleezu (please)" was my thought. We Japanese in trips abroad, when in a group, become bold speaking Japanese loudly sometimes inviting the bad impression of the surroundings, but once separated to be a few, become awkward and silent being unable to speak English in the English speaking environment.

I had a reservation with an American for dinner in the night. He was Mr. Lee Waters, whom I met in the ATA shortly after my visit there. He began to talk and talk about his career as the trucker with lots of episodes. According to

what he told me, he began the business as the owner operator and gradually made his company big. Things happened to him someday, he explained, that what with coworkers betrayals or some troubles, things drove him to quit the business and turned to be a consultant. The story was so complicated that I could not understand or remember all he said. He strongly wanted me to come to his home for more talk and more information.

We got out the hotel for his home in Northridge. His car was a beautiful Cadillac. Looking inside around the car, I said “Wou, very nice car! First time for me to have a ride in the Cadillac!” and he satisfactorily said “Thank you!”. He drove me around the city of Los Angeles including the Hollywood, Warner Brothers and NBC head office sometimes stopping for taking picture

His home was so big with a swimming pool, which looked like a dream for us Japanese. He had a beautiful wife, but she became a vegetable person by accident under the care of a Filipina doctor, whom, he said, he pays two thousand dollar a month. I met her and had a little talk, but never did I dream that I came to be destined to come and live in her mother country, the Philippines, after elapse of some eight years from that time. By the way, the earthquake that hit Los Angels a year after that, took away her life. That was what I was known by him years later.

He was one of the persons who gave me the most interesting materials concerning the owner operators. The pocket book “Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations” is the one. It has 400-page with small letters like a dictionary. In the process of my interviewing truck drivers, I often heard of this. Some of them called it saying, “That’s like a comics”, as if they do not care. They said, “It was like this thin at the beginning, but it became gradually thick like this.” The vents their anger on themselves.

Even a free country like America does have that much of rules and standards. That is for the safety as the first priority, I thought. By the way, the new health care program in the States has its program in some 2000 pages!

When I told him about my nephew living in Los Angeles, he called her to find the way to their home to take me there. Lee showed me so much of kindness, and we were parted with hugging.

My nephew, the daughter of my mother’s younger brother, Marion is the name, and his husband Henry. They were so happy to meet me. It was the reunion for us the first time after some ten years when they came to Hiroshima Japan.

As I had an appointment with a Japanese American

Buddhist priest who has been kind to take care of my son, Makoto, who is teaching the Japanese Karate in the town, the couple sent me back to the hotel by their car. They have Japan made Toyota, while I have American Taurus, Ford back in Japan. International cooperation for us by using the cars made by the other each country, I said.

Marion is a pure Japanese blood of the third generation with little knowledge of Japanese to speak. Her husband is also pure Japanese blood, but looks an American with almost none capability of speaking Japanese. He used to work for the NASA as a computer engineer. Both are retirees with pension with lots of time to spare with me. They were with me until the day I left there for home.

What was the most exciting thing when I first stepped in at their home was that I saw the classical photo of my mother when she was a little girl! It was the picture of some 90 years ago. She was so cute! I have never seen that old one before.

Our first plan was to go to Santiago, the far the southern of California. I had something to do there. It was to visit a Japanese gentleman living there. His name was Dr. Rikuma Ito, Ph.D.. He was born in the Northeast district in Japan, studied in the States as a Fulbright student in Michigan States University. He then became the resident of America. After his service as the chief professor of the economy department of the Michigan States University, he became the president of Ziebart Japan in Tokyo. Ziebart is the international franchiser for the rust prevention business, which my former company had the license for Hiroshima prefecture.

He lived in San Marcos in a beautiful home beside the lake with his Korean wife. Five years ago, he was the president of Japan Zeibart in Tokyo, who brought us a dozen Japanese franchisees to the States for the 25th anniversary of the Zeibart International corporation in Troy, Michigan. After his resignation from the company, we have not heard from him ever since. My first Japanese helpers who were kind to take care of me right after I arrived in the States, the group of the Japanese, working for Auto Alliance International, Inc. in Flat Rock, Michigan, succeeded in finding his name and address.

According to Dr. Ito, he was in the blink of death by cancer three years before. He was then the Executive Vice President of Energy Conversion Devices, Inc. He gave us wonderful lunch, and we talked and talked with good memories of the past when he was in Tokyo for our franchiser president. He said he was writing his autobiography. I said goodbye to him with his happiness.

It was late at night when we returned Marion's home. I was given a bedroom where my son used to be given for stays

when he was preparing for opening the Karate school in the town.

My nephew couple offered to be with me until I leave for Japan. Our destination was San Francisco. We left home at five in the morning by Henry's driving the car. The couple seemed so much interested in the world history trying to visit famous places of natural beauty and historic interest.

Henry was serious when young, he told me, to become a racing car driver. The way he drove was so nice and beautiful in the way he passes other cars through giving not at all scare to me.

Generally speaking to my eyes, the running vehicles are so close in the following distance. The word following distance is one thing I learned here. The Japanese term for it is "distance between vehicles". The English term of "following distance" is much more logical, because it is limited to the one between the two running in the same direction, not the one running along.

When we drove in the Interstates highway 5, I saw an electric scoreboard ordering "All trucks to weigh station". I asked Henry to follow the trucks in to see what it is like. Henry told me with a laugh that the truck drivers help each other by contacting by the radio so that they could escape from the weigh station check by getting down the high way to the old road. I missed trying to have a short talk with the weigh station man for the interview.

While driving up to the north on the Route 5, I could see nothing but wild and farm field and fields. Henry called it "Valley". "You call it a valley? No kidding! This is plain, isn't it?" was my words. The map shows the place with Coast Range Mountains to the west, and Siera Nevada Mountains on the east to form a valley. To us Japanese, it never looks like a valley, a vast plain it does look.

I do not remember where it was, but we came to a place where there stood so many tall wind wheels for generation. Strange to say, one of them were moving with all others stopped. Henry said he used to pass by there often times, but the first time he saw them stood still. We did not stop the car to check if there was no wind at all, though. Henry said, "They are greeting Yuuki's by stopping the motion, he said with a wink.

For Henry and Marion, the visit to San Francisco was the first time in one year. We ate big beefsteak with California wine in a luxurious restaurant. While enjoying, a beautiful waiter approached me saying, "How'd you like it?" I said "Oh, I like it very much! I'm enjoying it!" She said, "Good! Enjoy yourself!" and walked away in swaying her big and nice hips.

This sort of conversation is simple but seems less in us Japanese restaurant. We Japanese say, “Welcome” when the customers come, and say “Thank you for coming” when the customers leave in a very formal manner or tone. The real living and heartfelt conversation between the customer and the server is very rare. Maybe we Japanese are shy to the service talks. The difference of expressions between the English and the Japanese languages and its behavior is something I have witnessed with my own eyes during my few weeks stay in this country. We Japanese are inclined to try to understand each other in a way what we call “understand each other on the same wavelength”. As far as the labor and management is concerned, Japanese must learn from the American way of mutual understanding by talk and discussion, not by the feeling of expecting the same wavelength.

When we went into the hotel for a night, I began to sing to the registration man “I left my heart in San Francisco”. He really wanted me to sing it to the end, but I was hesitant to do it with a thought a gentleman never does that much for fun in such an occasion.

The cable car is something that is never spoken without when people talk about this city of San Francisco. The photos with the passengers riding on the steps with their bodies hanging out are familiar to the foreigners like us. We made a ride. I was told that the cable car was born in 1873, more than half a century before my birth. They say that a man, the president of a wire cable manufacturing company, saw a horse wagon fell and rolling down the slope, which he hit upon an idea of the cable car.

The car is so made that it runs by grasping the wire that is moving under the ground, and stops when the grasp is released, which means, when the car stops for the passengers, the operator(called “Grip man”) must do two things at one time, releasing the grip and pulling the brake lever. A big man with big and strong arms, working two levers in power, was a humorous scene. When I asked Henry what if the power of the brake not good enough, he laughed and said, “They roll down to the end.” In fact, it did happen in the past, they say.

In the last night in Marion’s home, we enjoyed the meal in a Japanese restaurant together with Marion’s younger brother, Kenichi, and his wife, Susan. Susan showed keen interest with sharp questions when I talked about the owner-operator system, and what I was tackling with it. The way she responded to my advocate made me feel she is a real intellectual person.

Back to Marion’s home, I called her younger sister May,

living in Hawaii, that I sure would visit the beautiful Hawaii as soon as I was prepared after my work of long absence from the office in Japan.

During my attendance to the ATA conference in Florida, I got associated with two gentlemen who came from Hawaii. The one was Mr. Sakakida, a Japanese American, the vice president of Hawaii Transportation, Inc., and the other was Mr. Luis, president of American Pacific Transport Co. Ltd. I called them to let them know that in near future, I would visit them.

We arrived at the airport much earlier so that we could enjoy being there for watching people with some coffee. Five years before, I was in the same spot with my difficulty of standing and walking with my viewpoints very narrow. However, I could stand still in the lobby with no difficulty I was before even with no walking cane, all because of the braces on my leg and foot.

Thus, the last day of my trip to America ended with so many memories of accomplishments with not a single mishap and trouble, for which I was happy and thankful. Tomorrow will be my departure for Japan.