

A Quarter Century at Aichi University

(Reminiscences of Angus Macindoe nearing retirement)

My 27-year career at Aichi falls naturally into three phases: Liberal Arts Faculty(1989-1997), Faculty of International Communication (from 1998) and finally Project 2012, the move to Nagoya. This collection of random memories will thus be divided into three phases.

Phase 1

On April Fool's Day 1989 I arrived in Toyohashi, and spent the first month staying in Ivan Cosby's flat, as my own was not yet ready. As my guide and mentor, Ivan advised me to give towels to denizens of all the other apartments, so I bought Pierre Cardin towels from JUSCO and presented them at every door. Only later was I told that simple white towels would have sufficed.

I had a formal meeting with President Makino to sign my 2-year contract. I remember thinking this was a pretty long commitment, when Ivan whispered in my ear, "Just be aware, from the Japanese point of view this is much longer term." He was right of course.

Classes in the Liberal Arts Faculty (*Kyoyobu*) had around 45 students and I was struck by how fashionable they all were, compared to the scruffy style of my own student days. I shared an office with John Hamilton on Miyoshi Campus, and taught classes there as well as Toyohashi and night-school in Kurumamichi. I usually met the same 6 or 7 people each morning on the highway bus to Miyoshi, who formed the unofficial Tomei Travellers' Club. Members included Nakayama-san, Kuremoto-san and Funabashi-san, now professor at Toyama University.

Many teachers made me feel welcome. Professor Ike had me to stay in Okazaki and gave me a standing invitation to come back any time ("Mi casa es tu casa," as Cervantes might have said), while I've had more Christmas dinners chez Simon Sanada than Honda *senshu* has scored goals for Japan. Professor Tamoto has regularly invited me for New Year, and Professors Nakanishi and Miyoshi were often hospitable too. Professor Kimura, Pronunciation King, taught me rice-planting on his farm one weekend, and Professor Uchida had me to dinner so his wife could instruct me in the mysteries of making *misoshiru*. One Professor Yamaguchi coached me in tennis, the other in playing *igo*, and Mrs Naruse explained about *ozoni* by inviting me to dinner and serving it up in great quantity. I felt like being a member of a family.

Entrance Exam marking was tough in those days. To mark over 20,000 papers took nearly a week and we had to pace ourselves. Delicious cookies, cakes or mikan were delivered every day, and after dinner at the end Professor Chiba would lead a group to a karaoke bar. Only after he had sung 2 or 3 dirge-like songs could we prise his hand from the mike so others could have a turn. Occasionally Rev Cosby would sing Phil the Fluter's Ball and dance an Irish jig.

Phase 2

As a member of the new Faculty of International Communication in 1998, my life changed. For one thing we were based in brand new No 5 Building on Toyohashi Campus, and taught conversation classes with a maximum of 15 students. For another, we were joined by Professor Jon Blundell, experienced language teacher and author of O.U.P textbooks (his worldwide sales were said to have exceeded a million copies), and 5 new "TTs" (Terrific Teachers) on short contracts, to get our close-lipped students talking freely. The TT system proved a great success and there have been many fine teachers since, but none better than that first multinational team of Christine, Katharine, Julie, Andy and Ian. My own teaching load fell to 3 classes a week, with corresponding cut in salary, but I had the fun of helping Jon to coordinate classes with the team, observe them teaching and have feedback sessions afterwards. I learnt a lot in the process. I recall Julie eschewed the phrase, "Well, I must be going soon," and drilled her students instead to say, "I'm outta here!" When the bell tolled for class end, they couldn't leave the room without using those words.

Another exciting change was having seminar classes, where we could not only teach subjects close to our own hearts, but had the same small group of students for two years, thus getting to know them really well.

It was a great luxury to work only 5 minutes bicycle ride from my flat. I remember my father saying he had never tasted the life of a commuter: for 35 years he could walk from his home to classroom, sports field or meeting room, and now I was in that happy state. I discovered how much more time I had available to spend in the office!

Phase 3

"Project 2012 Aichi University" was the code name, like the U.S. military name "Operation Desert Storm", to cover the building of the new Nagoya Campus at Sasashima. It seemed a daring move, as if Harvard University were suddenly to build a new campus in the heart of Boston, but of course it had sound demographic reasons behind it. After the decision had been

made, many people worked for years to design the buildings and plan the move. From my point of view the big uncertainty was about the new study-offices: would I have a view? would I have fresh air? The computer-guided impartial lottery favoured me and I was allocated a room near the back stairs, ideal for quick movement up and down.

These four years have shown the move to be a success, with good students still competing to get into Aidai. Of course everyone has learned to adapt, to plan their best route to campus, to locate the most convenient coffee-shops, *senzo* and restaurants nearby. Having JICA at hand is a bonus: I take my *Nyumon zemi* students there to learn a little about the Third World, and the Crossroads Café provides quick good food, as well as the opportunity to chat to Egyptian doctors and social workers from Senegal. Sasashima is great for transport, and when I am in a hurry to get home the Shinkansen wafts me back like a magic carpet.

Now other tall buildings such as Global Gate are rising around us, but 2017 will see the Global Convention Center and our own new tower-block rising to meet the challenge. I will not be here to see it myself, but I take my leave confident that the future of Aichi University's Nagoya Campus is bright.