

Reflecting on My 88th Birthday Celebration

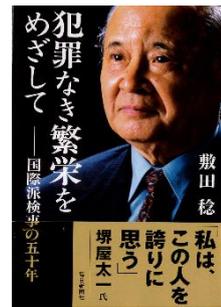
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Reflecting on My 88th Birthday Celebration

On the afternoon of Saturday, 31 October 2020, my two daughters, their daughters, their family members and I got together at a seaside hotel near *Kamakura* to celebrate my 88th birthday.

Despite being the end of October, the rays of the sun were warm and glittering in tender waves. I was filled with happiness, but I could not help thinking, “What if it were Minoru’s 88th birthday celebration?” But he was only present in the photograph that we had brought with us.

In my husband’s book titled *Striving for Prosperity without Crime*, he wrote that he would be active until 88 years old. He sincerely hoped that he would be. The title of my article was his goal, and his life was a series of hard-working days, running at full speed. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and respect to Japanese government official and novelist the late Mr. SAKAIYA Taichi who expressed his admiration for Minoru by saying, “I am proud of him”.



The gathering was cheerful while Minoru’s picture watched over us. The next day, we moved to my house near the island of *Enoshima*, and each of us greeted Grandfather at a Buddhist altar where we thought about him and prayed for him for some time. Then, my second great-grandchild, who joined our family one year ago, and his father arrived, making us more cheerful and busier. My family members are an invaluable gift from Minoru to me. I enjoyed two days filled with gratitude and happiness and many gorgeous flowers.

Our Home Parties in Japan

Now, I would like to add some information to the book’s chapter “Shikita’s Home Party” based upon my memories.

First of all, thinking back to our days of living in the *Yonbancho* district in central Tokyo, I would like to take some credit for a truly amazing feat of hospitality. We invited twenty to thirty guests from Japan and abroad to our apartment for public

officials. Our two daughters of course, Mrs. Ampo and Mrs. Kawakami, supported us in many ways. Some guests might have been surprised at the unfamiliar dishes I cooked with a cookbook in one hand due to my poor skills as a housewife. One day, I heard that the curry was delicious but a little bit mild, so I started crushing red chili peppers. Suddenly, a few small pieces blew into my eyes. I shouted, “Arrrggg!” Minoru immediately took me to the washroom and told me, “Wash your eyes!” He turned the faucet upward and pushed me into the stream of water shooting up in the air and washed my eyes. After cooling off, I opened my eyes and saw our junior high school daughter checking how to care for eyes in the magazine “Home Medicine”.

I think the sum of these small stories made us a genuine family. Speaking of our apartment in *Yonbancho*, I recall that it faced west, as my present house does, facing toward Mt. Fuji, with the strong sunshine in the summer.

During Minoru’s posts as the chief of the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Kyoto, Hiroshima and Nagoya, we lived in public residences. During this period, we held home parties for staff members and their wives. Thanks to their generosity and knowledge of local food, these parties were of course successful, thanks to their assistance and local specialties! Also, we all became close friends, making our stay richer and more fruitful. I have fond memories of all of them – many of whom I am still in touch with today.

After his retirement as a public prosecutor, we moved to Fujisawa, but Minoru became even busier than he was in Tokyo. Local volunteers in Fujisawa kindly established “*Fuji-no-ne-kai*” (Mt. Fuji viewing lover’s club), and we took every opportunity to get together and enjoy parties viewing the magnificent scenery of Mt. Fuji and *Enoshima*. On an evening in July, Mr. Kamiya (former Prosecutor General) and many guests got together for a fireworks festival and enjoyed a cheerful party with drinks, good conversation and the main entertainment of fireworks in front of us.

Our Home Parties in Vienna

In his book, Minoru wrote about various parties that we held in Vienna.



Market in Vienna

Preparing for these parties was always challenging because the composition of guests and purpose of the party differed every time. But it was also fun. Minoru was actively engaged in the plans and preparations. We went shopping together in commissaries and markets, exchanging our ideas. We enjoyed this kind of “cooperative work”. When I recall these times, they are all good old memories. I was really grateful for the support of

our Japanese friends who cooked and brought many dishes, especially *Tempura*.

On the occasion of the Cuba Crime Congress, thanks to the arrangement of Mr. Kawakami, a friend stationed in Vienna, we were able to borrow an electric rice-cooker for participants from Japan.

We were also invited to parties. Italian dishes of Dr. Eduardo Vetere's family (particularly huge, broiled bell peppers often appeared at our firework parties), Argentine style roast beef of Mr. David's family, and warmhearted homemade Libyan dishes of Mohammad Abdul-Aziz's family. Homemade dishes in their own country styles were delicious and heart-warming. The facial expressions and laughs of the guests were precious experiences for me. We were often invited by the Redo family to their home. They were kind enough to provide us with beds several times when we visited Vienna. I will always cherish the many good memories I have of Mr. and Ms. Redo.

There was a Japanese Club in Vienna. However, being conscious about his job as a Japanese public prosecutor, Minoru rarely attended the club meetings. But he enjoyed having Japanese dishes and playing mahjong with a small group of intimate friends. One night, we were surprised at finding our cars and the roads all white. With great struggle, we cleared the road and cars at midnight and went home. Our old house was located on the top of a steep slope on the opposite side of town, where many Japanese were living. Finally, we succeeded in reaching our home by a dangerous, snowy, midnight drive by Minoru after a long mahjong party! As you can imagine, we were relieved to be home!



Home in Vienna



Home in Vienna

At our home parties, not only preparations but also greetings after the party were tough. All the guests were in the best of spirits when leaving and said, "Thank you *Hideko*", "*Haideko*", "*Ideko*", "*Hideko saan*" and hugged or shook hands firmly. (Many of them were well built!) The next day, I had to clean up despite the enduring pain in my right hand. At that time, I learned not to wear a ring on my right hand.

Backstage at International Meetings

I realized that parties were important preparation for meetings and places to confirm the outcomes of the meetings.

I felt the tense atmosphere before and after the meetings. Once Minoru came home one day and I asked him, “Supper first or shower?” He shouted at me, “Shut up! Don’t you understand how many people I talked with today!!”. What could I do at that time? I took his coat without saying a word, looking at his exhausted face.

Different languages, customs, religions and the moral senses they cultivate cause difficulties in interacting people with people from different parts of the world.

I remember one particularly terrible incident at the Milan Congress. On the last day of the congress, Minoru was happy with the success and slept soundly. The next morning, however, he found that the many presents, which had been piled in the basement, from various country delegations had been stolen. Realizing what happened, he groaned “Agh!”. He surely thought, “Is this the success of the Crime Congress that the UN is proud of?!” I cannot forget his devastated voice and figure. What could he write in the thank you letters to the respective countries? Who was responsible for the incident? He exhaustedly muttered, “Who could steal in a city with so many churches?” This incident is very hard to imagine in Japan. I believe most people have a wonderful moral sense deep in their hearts from childhood. “Do not do anything that would make you ashamed of yourself; God is watching”. But with regret, I happened to witness that, in reality, some do not.



Justice systems also might vary naturally according to national agencies and characters. I do not think it is because people’s senses of good and bad are different one from another. As readers may know well, the Carlos Ghosn case is truly regrettable. It is an unfortunate case in which laws were either misunderstood or maliciously interpreted from the perspective of most Japanese. I wonder what Minoru would do if he were alive and not retired as the vice president of the International Association of Prosecutors. I cannot say clearly what he would do, but I believe he would do something. I cannot help but think that there are many criminal justice practitioners, young lawyers, and prosecutors who can confidently explain the criminal justice system in Japan. I do not think there are different standards of “good and bad” laying in places we cannot reach. I hope that the case will be properly dealt with through the Japanese criminal justice system.

Time slips away swiftly, and our lives are limited. What should we do? What should be done now? As Japanese, we should value our original nature: we know right

from wrong, we are literate, we are diligent with rich culture – and these values should be passed on to, and developed for, future generations.



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The Final Parties in His Life

If he could have worked until 88 years old, we might have gotten closer to “Prosperity without Crime”. But with regret, as he got close to 80 years old, he lost stamina and took rest at home. I think the readers may know well how energetic he used to be. Therefore, please allow me to introduce Minoru’s days in retirement.

“Welcome home. I’ve been waiting for you.” He welcomed me with his full smile, with a pair of my slippers neatly kept under the light of the entrance door. Sometimes I missed greetings and found him asleep. When he woke, he started getting angry by saying, “I was awake, but you didn’t greet me. I’ve been waiting for you to come home.” Can you imagine such a cute Minoru Shikita? Of course, these scenes are in the last days when we spent our lives together here. He was fascinated with the sky at sunset, Mt. Fuji, the sea, *Enoshima* island, Miura Peninsula far away in the east, and often he called me to the window. His life was a continuation of hard battles. Therefore, we were allowed pleasant and precious days, though they were too short. Now, I hold his picture in my arms towards the sky at sunset and Mt. Fuji shining pink in the morning and ask him, “From where are you watching this beautiful view?”

Minoru’s Final Party

At the end of January 2017 (the year Minoru passed away), we invited a party of Dr. Vetere and others led by then UNAFEI Director Mr. Senta. It was the last official party. Minoru, our eldest daughter, and I welcomed eight members (two were young public prosecutors of the Supreme Public Prosecutors Office). Since five



main guests were foreigners, we mainly spoke in English. I recall the dishes were sushi, Japanese steamed brothy custard, and others, and *sake* (Japanese rice wine). We were pleased to catch up with our old friends. The party was cheerful with the sun shining brightly outside. Minoru was very pleased to see everyone and to join in their conversations although he was not active. I think he was trying hard to be a good host, but he had difficulty hearing. Still, he looked happy and saw them off with smiles.

Two months later, we family members got together happily to celebrate his birthday, and that was his last one.

Minoru's very final guests were his nephews and their wives. It was 1 July 2017. Their gift was premium grade Japanese *sake* in sympathy of the death of their uncle. The *sake* was *Shizuoka Iso Jiman*, which was served at the Lake *Toya* Summit.



Last picture 1 July 2017

He tasted the *sake* little by little, together with his guests, and ate sushi little by little. At the end of the party, he sang his favorite number, the "Song of Wandering Mongolia", three times in a soulful and strong voice from the bottom of his heart. He sincerely and emotionally told his two nephews, "It's your turn." Then, we said goodbye to each other at the entrance, "Take care. See you again!" After I saw them off and returned back to our house, he was already in bed.

After that, he did not drink a drop of *sake*. Did he decide that he had finished drinking *sake* for the rest of his life? It was an admirable decision. Although I have more memories, I think these three parties were suitable for him to close his life.

This morning, it is so clear – Mt. Fuji with a veil of light snow on the top and white fishing boats gleaming on Sagami Bay. I went out on the veranda with Minoru's picture held close to my breast showing him the beautiful scenery.

The Covid-19 pandemic spreading around the world makes us anxious. I sincerely hope all of you lead your lives carefully by believing that as long as God is watching, everything will be alright.

I will dedicate myself as much and as long as possible to the growth and further development of the Foundation, which was Minoru's sincere wish. When it is my time, I hope that he will welcome me with a smile by saying, "*Deko*, I've been waiting for you!"

Postscript

It has saddened me to have received the obituaries of numerous friends and acquaintances of whom I have many fond memories. On the other hand, I am truly grateful to those who have supported *Shikita's* activities, as well as those of public prosecutors' offices, UNAFEI and ACPF. I would like to express my deepest gratitude, and sincere condolences for the repose of their souls.

The Kyoto Crime Congress is scheduled to be held in March 2021. Even if the Congress will be not held due to Covid-19, let's continue our crime prevention efforts. Minoru is surely watching over us somewhere in the universe.