

## “A VALUABLE EXPERIENCE”

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The Center has great meaning for me. My experience at the Center has given me so many things. My interactions with Americans (and others) who are interested in Japanese studies have greatly influenced my way of thinking and attitude toward life, and the Center has been an invaluable place for me to become aware of the importance of Japanese language education for foreigners. The fact that I have been blessed with almost unceasing opportunities to teach at the Center over the 20 years that I have worked there, I cannot help but think of the depth of the ties I have formed with the Center. Moreover, I have been a part of the Center since its opening.

The foundation of the Center began with the Center for Japanese Studies at Stanford University, which opened in 1961. The Japanese language institute was established in Tokyo by Stanford University as a pioneer of Japanese studies, which had been rapidly growing after the Korean War, in cooperation with the University of Tokyo, Keio University, Waseda University, and Japan Women's University, and was located in Wakeijuku, Takada Oimatsu-chō, Bunkyo-ku at that time. It was a three-story reinforced concrete dormitory for Japanese male university students and had classrooms. The office was located in the former Hosokawa residence, which was a Japanese-style house with a tokonoma (alcove) and slippers. This was greatly welcomed by the Americans, who were interested in Japanese culture, but was extremely inconvenient for the Japanese, who wanted a more rational Western lifestyle. In terms of education, students did not adjust to the idea of learning only Japanese in Japan, and various problems arose. Indeed, the teaching method had not yet been established and was still in a state of exploration. This was the pioneering period of Japanese language education. Not only in education, but also in the daily lives of the students, there were difficulties. At that time, Japan had not yet escaped from postwar poverty, and undergraduate students who were forced to live in Wakei Juku (for men) and the dormitories of Japan Women's University (for women) had to experience inconvenience in all aspects of their lives, including meals, that were unlike those in their home countries, which was very difficult. These various realities provided valuable experiences for both the students and the Japanese.

However, it is precisely because of these chaotic times that the Center overcame them and achieved the spectacular growth it has since achieved.

In 1963, the Center moved from Wakei Juku to International Christian University, and was eventually established as an alliance of American and Canadian universities (initially eight universities). The need for Japanese language education in the U.S. grew that much. The number of students increased and their enthusiasm for the Japanese language grew. Teachers explored new methods of education, and handmade teaching materials were created one after another. In 1967, with the arrival of Director Butler and the relocation to Kioicho, a new era began. In that year, I was invited to Columbia University for a year to engage in Japanese language education, and the methods used at the Center seemed to be of great interest there for the first time.

When I returned home after a year away, I found that the Center had completely changed and was full of vitality. New teaching materials and methods were developed one after another. The number of Japanese language institutes, including courses offered by various universities, gradually increased. It was a joy to see the Center receive recognition as a particularly outstanding institution among them. I was very happy to be able to work in the best place in Japan, or in other words, the best place in the world. The most important thing was that I was blessed with excellent students. This was a great stimulus in both good and bad ways. I learned a lot from the students at the Center. Behind them were the predecessors and the soil of Japanese studies at each university that nurtured the students. What I learned from the Center was not just the importance of Japanese language education. It also had a great impact on my own field of specialization. Even after I left the Center and retired from Japanese language education, the Center still occupies a significant place in my heart. Many of my former students are now at the forefront of Japanese studies or Japan-related work in the U.S. and around the world. All of the directors, professors, and staff with whom I have worked are burned into the albums of my heart. The Center is a great asset to me.