

Education for Personal Growth

By Shoichi Akazawa

A dozen years or so ago, back when I was executive vice president at Fujitsu, the board was surprised to hear a proposal that all management be given three months of special training on reaching the age of 45.

One of the purposes of this proposal was to give these people a chance to get away from the office and to recharge their batteries as human beings. For someone who has joined the company right out of college, reaching 45 means that he has spent about 20 years with the company and has another 15 to go before retirement at age 60. If this were a horse race, we would be coming around the third corner. This is an excellent time for these people to look back on their careers to date and to consider where they want to be in another 15 or even 25 years.

Thus the training was not to impart specialized expertise but was a broad-based curriculum including theater, the arts, history and international economic trends. The only problem was that these people were holding down key positions within the company. Somebody who is 45 and has been with the company for 20 years is more likely than not to be middle-management in development, production, sales, finance or some other key section. Could we afford to pull these key people off their jobs all at once for three months at a stretch? (Actually, it would be a quarter of them at a time, since the program was going to be a continuing program taking one-quarter of those concerned in each of four groups.)

As might be expected, there was considerable opposition expressed by directors who feared that the program would hurt the company. One director from production suggested that they would be able to live with the program if it were two weeks long but that three months would shut them down. Yet the president and I held out for adoption, and we finally got the board's approval for a program that is continuing even today.

While many observers have pointed to lifelong employment and seniority-

based rewards as the main features characterizing Japanese employment, both of these features are closely linked to the strong effort that companies make in employee education and training. First is the intense training that the new employee gets, then the training preparatory to promotion to management ranks, then the education offered for middle management. In addition, many big Japanese companies have their own schools where they provide advanced vocational training for high-school graduates. Even so, Fujitsu's three months of "renewal training" for 45-year-olds stands out as particularly ambitious and farsighted.

Japanese companies and workers alike are now rethinking old values and trying to come up with new paradigms for the relationship between the company and the community, between the work and the worker, and between personal preferences and corporate imperatives. I believe that this rethinking is beneficial for both the company and the employee, and I like to think that Fujitsu's three months for 45-year-olds was a precursor to this trend.

Although I left Fujitsu eight years ago, I am proud to have retained my association with the "45-renewal program" as a lecturer.

COMING UP

When the first issue of the *Journal* appeared in 1982, it was one of only a few English-language periodicals published in Japan. Japan had a sizable deficit in the communications "balance" with the United States at that time. Today, there is a variety of such periodicals as well as comparatively larger flows of information from Japan to the United States, although a wide gap still exists between them.

That continuing gap is why the November/December issue of the *Journal* will focus on this theme in its Cover Story item. Toshio Matsuoka, a professor at Kanagawa University, will review the matter generally, while Isao Tokuhisa, a senior researcher at an institute of broadcasting affiliated with the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, will discuss it from the viewpoint of the electronic media.

Readers to Target

As I read through the May/June 1991 issue of the *Journal*, I tried to figure out what kind of people the magazine targets for its readership. This particular edition contained a series of articles on "emerging economic ties" in the Japan Sea/Northeast Asia region, as well as a smattering of other pieces. The three main articles did a good job of giving a general overview of the topic, quite effective for an individual with a sketchy, moderately informed conception of the region. This seemed to indicate that the *Journal's* readers are people with a limited knowledge of Japan and a general interest in Japan/Asian affairs. If that is the case, then I guess that this is the right editorial approach.

As someone who has lived in Japan for a long time, someone who owns and operates a business here and whose personal future is very much tied to Japan and its economic prosperity, I'd like to see a little more.

Although there is no shortage of interesting articles on Japan coming out in foreign publications, or in Japanese-language magazines in Japan, there are very few English-language publications that give informative articles offering insight into things Japanese, as they are seen by the Japanese.

As a publication of the Japan Economic Foundation, I think that the *Journal* ought to target a more discerning readership. The articles ought to spend less time on general introductions and background information, dig deeper and take some chances. Sure, you might decrease accessibility for the casual, uninformed reader, but I believe that there are enough serious, information-hungry individuals out there to make up the difference. And you never know—you just might spark some interest in those casual readers to do a little homework so that they too can understand what's going on.

Larry Greenberg
President, Urban Connections Inc.

The *Journal* welcomes letters of opinion or comment from its readers. Letters, including the writer's name and address, should be sent to: the Editor, Japan Economic Foundation, 11th Floor, Fukoku Seimei Bldg., 2-2 Uchisaiwai-cho 2-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100 Japan. Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity.

Brain Death Report Could Boost Transplants

A government panel has recommended in an interim report that brain death should be regarded as the end of life, rather than the traditional criterion of the heart ceasing to beat—a decision which could open the way to more organ transplants in Japan using dead donors.

The report issued by the Provisional Commission for the Study of Brain Death and Organ Transplantation on June 14 is the culmination of 15 months of deliberations since the commission's formation in March 1990. The final report is expected next January.

At the press conference announcing the report, commission Chairman Michio Nagai said that, assuming certain conditions are met, there should be no problem with organ transplants from people who are certified as brain dead. At the same time, however, he added that there are important ethical considerations that need to be addressed and standards that need to be met before transplants can take place on a large scale.

Nevertheless, the unanimous decision by the 15-member commission that a neurological definition of death should be the legal criterion under certain conditions was seen as a victory for those who advocate that brain death rather than heartbeat should be relied on and, by implication, for advocates of organ transplants.

Although the report unanimously recognized brain death, there was a strong dissenting minority opinion arguing against organ transplants from the brain-dead. At his press conference, Nagai said he hopes next year's final report will be able to provide some specific guidelines on organ transplants. Declaring that the interim report should not be interpreted as a blanket go-ahead, he urged the medical community to proceed cautiously.

Created by special legislation as an advisory body to the prime minister, the commission consists of 15 medical, legal, and other professionals and has itself five advisers. This interim report was issued in an effort to publicize the commission's deliberations to date and to elicit opinions from the general public.

The interim report begins by noting that the only heart transplant so far performed in Japan, from a brain-dead donor in 1968, sowed widespread suspicion of medical practices and had ramifications going well beyond the Sapporo hospital where the surgeon, Dr. Juro Wada, was practicing. It said that this incident raised questions not just about the ethics of individual doctors but about the ethical standards of the entire profession, and that the incident highlighted the need for professionalism in medical practice.

On the central issue of brain death, it was agreed that this is a state in which the patient has irrevocably lost control over his or her body and that this can rightly be classified as clinical death. In determining whether or not a patient is brain-dead, the commission said that the criteria proposed by the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Brain Death Study Group (the so-called Takeuchi Criteria, named after group leader Kazuo Takeuchi) seem reasonable and noted that there is increasing popular acceptance of brain death as the criterion for the end of life.

Building from this base, the entire commission agreed that there should be no impediments blocking organ transplants so long as there are willing donors and suitable recipients.

However, this unanimity is broken with the dissenting opinion filed by a minority within the commission and issued as an integral part of the commission's interim report. Written by Takeshi Umehara, a philosopher and a leading scholar of Japanese cultural history, and signed by three others, this minority opinion declares that it cannot go along with the majority's acceptance of brain

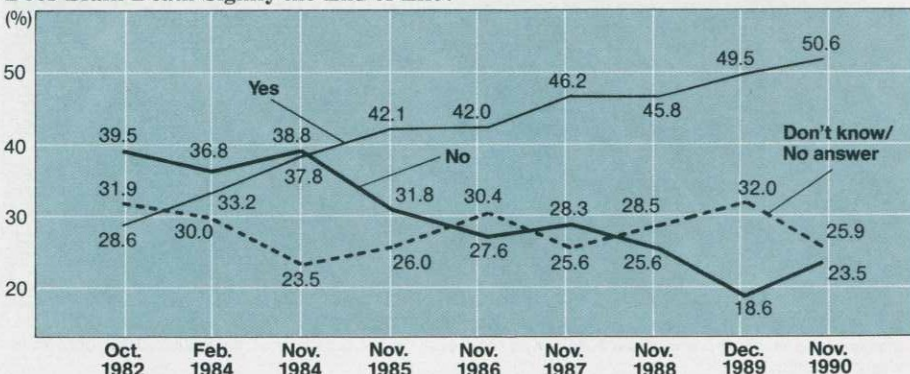
death. The body is still warm and breathing, they argue. How can this be death? In addition, the minority stipulates four stiff conditions that would have to be met before they would approve of organ transplants from the brain-dead, including a clear statement of intent from the donor, clear-cut diagnosis of brain death, and that the institution generally recognizes each patient's right to see and make a copy of his or her own medical records. Given Umehara's background, it may be that this is a manifestation of Buddhism's differences from Christianity and its easy acceptance of the individual's right to die.

Many organ transplant specialists had hoped that the commission's interim report would give them a de facto green light for more transplants from Japanese donors, but Nagai explicitly warned against such an interpretation at his press conference.

Having spent most of its time on the question of brain death, the commission will now turn its attention to the conditions that would have to be met before organ transplants could become widespread in Japan. Because even some of the people who did not sign the minority view share its desire for the strictest conditions to be imposed, the road to a final report looks long and rocky indeed. Is new legislation needed? If so, what kind? What about the legal requirement for a police autopsy in cases where death is not due to natural causes, such as automobile accidents—a procedure which has often worked as a barrier to organ transplants from such would-be donors?

The first hesitant steps have been taken toward recognizing brain death in Japan, but it will be some time yet before organ transplants become common. ■

Does Brain Death Signify the End of Life?



Source: Public opinion survey by Yomiuri Shimbum

Old City of Kyoto Divided Over Development Plan

The ancient capital of Kyoto is embroiled in a dispute which is polarizing its 1,300,000 citizens: whether to push modernization through economic development or preserve its historic landscape.

The 1,000-year-old city still attracts millions of Japanese and foreign tourists every year (foreigners totaled 464,000 in 1990), but its economic weight has been declining year by year. Kyoto accounted for only 1% of Japan's gross domestic product in fiscal 1989 compared with 1.76% in 1970.

In an effort to revitalize the ancient capital, Kyoto's business community, led by the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is drawing up an ambitious blueprint for transforming the city into a modern metropolis bristling with skyscrapers. The plan calls for the creation of a huge commercial center around the Kyoto railway station.

In May, the design of a new 60-meter-high station building was chosen in an international competition. Kyoto Hotel, the city's oldest Western-style hotel, located in the old part of the city, is also to be converted into a 60-meter structure under

the plan. Kyoto's mayor has already endorsed the Kyoto Hotel rebuilding, and the Kyoto city office is reportedly ready to ease regulations which currently limit the height of buildings in central Kyoto to 45 meters.

However, construction of high-rise modern Western structures detracts from the historic beauty of the city with its quiet rows of old tile-roofed Japanese-style shops and houses. Not surprisingly, many civic groups have raised strong objections to the rebuilding as well as to the revitalization plan itself. Objections are particularly strong against the rebuilding of the Kyoto Hotel, which stands in an area abounding with historical structures.

More than half of Kyoto citizens are said to be against the building of skyscrapers, which they say do not suit the ancient city and will obstruct picturesque views of surrounding mountains.

Uzo Nishiyama, professor emeritus of Kyoto University, heads a civic group opposed to the Kyoto restructuring plan. He says Kyoto's traditional landscape is part of its historical culture and that further deregulation is impermissible since environmental destruction through unrestricted development has already reached alarming proportions.



Photo: Kyoto Shimburn

Amid the heated argument over the choice between economic development and the preservation of the historical landscape, tourist spots like Kiyomizu Temple attract many visitors.

Buddhist sects are also critical of further modernization, noting that Kyoto has something worth more than economic prowess. Some Buddhist leaders say the Japanese have forgotten "cultural comfort" in their lives in the process of economic development.

The dispute has caused Koichi Tsukamoto, chairman of the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to resign from his post as an independent board member of Kyoto Hotel.

To pacify the anti-modernization group of citizens and forge a consensus of the whole city on Kyoto's rebirth, some members of the business community are exploring the possibility of revising the restructuring plan in a way that would preserve the historical landscape of the old city north of the railway station while proceeding with the large-scale development of a new city south of the station.

The way seems to be open for compromise. "Preservation of historical landscapes and economic development for the betterment of people's lives can go side by side," says Shuichi Kato, a well-known writer and critic. "As in Europe, administrations in Japan should play a positive role in financing the preservation of historical landscapes."

Paris, where regulations cover not only the height of structures but even the position of windows so as to preserve the city's historical identity, is a good example of a historic city which has developed successfully while maintaining its traditional character.



Photo: Kyoto Shimburn

Due largely to the construction of new buildings and houses in the last decade or so, the traditional face of Kyoto is changing rapidly.