

Greetings from the President's Office

2017.7.24 NO.9

Financial-Aid supported by honey bees

College freshmen start their new academic life full of hope and anxiety. Knowing how to take care of yourself while living alone becomes important. Some media have recently covered that there has been a gradual trend for college students to receive less allowance from parents year by year. Therefore, it can be said that students are required to earn their own living expenses. I had the same concern when I moved from my hometown in Tochigi Prefecture to Tokyo when I started my college life. If I remember correctly, back in 1964, the annual tuition fee for national universities used to be 9,000 yen. Even in view of the improving economic climate of that period, the fee was very low. This indicated the priority that was placed on higher education at the national level. To top it all, the fee was divided into halves to pay twice a year. Soon after my life in Tokyo started, I found a job as a private tutor. I worked twice a week and earned 5,000 yen a month. The amount I needed for my daily life was 20,000 yen per month and my parents sent me 10,000 yen monthly, so there was still a 5,000 yen gap, which was a big concern of mine.

When young, my father kept honeybees for fun. His relative gave him a beehive, and that was the beginning of his hobby. By the time I started college, he owned almost 100 hives, and it turned into more than just a hobby. Honeybees form a group around a Queen Bee (the average number of bees in a beehive is around 20,000), working bees visit various flowers for nectar and turn it into beeswax with their saliva. In a beehive, they create their own room in a hexagonal shape cell where the Queen Bee lays eggs one by one in each room, and the eggs become larva. Working bees diligently give larva nectar and the size of their society gradually develops. During the very first two days, the eggs are deposited in a hexagonal room and the working bees provide the larva with a milky food called "Royal Jelly." After two more days, most all "kids" are provided a regular meal to help them grow into working bees, except for one, which will become the Queen. The average lifespan for a working bee is generally around two months, yet the Queen lives for three years and will continue to lay eggs throughout its life. Beekeepers take their beehives to various flower spots so that they can collect nectar, and the beehives are moved to different flower areas after one season. It is important the beehives be first placed in the south where flowers bloom earlier and then are gradually moved northward throughout the season. There are definitive differences in quality among various honey, and popular ones are odorless with a smooth texture and sweetness that is generally derived from

lotus flowers or rape blossom, whereas in contrast, chestnut flowers will create a stronger odor and richer taste.

My father, like any beekeeper, used to carry his hundreds of beehives to rice fields, open yards, and forests near Boso Peninsula by a pickup truck at the beginning of spring every year, and gradually moved them northward toward Ibaraki, Tochigi, and Fukushima, collecting nectar from flowers, and finally return to Tochigi at the end of flower season. Besides his main business, he visited his beehives very frequently for many months. It was not easy to carry the honey bottles, which can weigh up to several dozen kilograms (equaling to several 5-gallon square cans) and "Royal Jelly" which equals to 15 to 20 200-gram cans. Every year, several farmers would allow him to place beehives on their farm so that the honey bees can cross-pollinate their fruit and crops. The relationship between beekeepers and farmers is interdependent.

Going back to my story about tuition, my father came up with an idea to sell his honey and Royal Jelly to my neighbors in Tokyo, so I started visiting my neighbors in search for orders. It did not work well at first since I was shy and embarrassed. However, one day, the master of my favorite diner felt ill and would occasionally be exhausted from fatigue, but his job did not allow him to close the diner and kept him standing in the kitchen. I mentioned unintentionally that Royal Jelly might work well for his symptoms. Although he had only half heartedly believed me, he decided to try the Royal Jelly. I gave him a bottle as a sample.

A few days later, I visited his diner and the master welcomed me with a big smile, saying the Royal Jelly helped him a lot and his condition was getting better remarkably. Since then, he came to recommend our Royal Jelly to his customers and gradually people became interested in our products. Little by little, I received orders. I once even received orders from several people at the same time. My financial situation was gradually improving. Each time I received an order, my father would ship his products after my phone calls, and I became busier delivering our products to my neighbors. The more orders we received, the busier I became, so much so that I even started to get concerned about my study. After discussions with my father, we decided to sell only 5-6 bottles of Royal Jelly per month. Thus, at least that way my financial issue would no longer be a problem. Honey and Royal Jelly were not that popular at the time, but sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had kept my "business" and expanded my sales channels, my career path might have changed drastically, into that of a businessperson selling honey and Royal Jelly, and not the path of an academic. This is a fond memory of mine about how I worked and paid my way through college life, about 50 years ago.



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