

Greetings from the President's Office

2019.03.18 NO.15

In Awe of the Akita Dog

Akita dogs remain popular even though the year of the Dog has already passed. AIU has been fostering relationships with Akita dogs, and *Tsubaki-hime* (which means Princess Camellia in Japanese), a neighbor's graceful dog, who already passed away, often used to walk around on campus.

Our university's green mascot was designed with the motif of the Akita dog and named "ONE" which comes after the meaning "cutting edge" such as in "No. 1" and the sound of the dog's bark in Japanese, "wan."

In 2016, AIU held a forum that focused on Akita dogs with the participation of Dr. Yasushi Akashi, the former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, delivering episodes of the *Hachiko* dog, which became known worldwide from the movies "*Hachiko Story*" and "*Hachi: A Dog's Tale*." During Dr. Akashi's position at the United Nations in New York, his family used to own an Akita dog called Lucky. Its regal posture fascinated his neighbors in the US with much admiration.

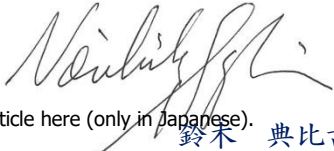
I like dogs very much and grew up with them; some of them were strays that I adopted while others were newborn puppies born from neighboring families, all of which I desperately begged my parents to take in. All their names were *Yotaro*.

It was a hot summer day 60 years ago when I walked to the 20 meter wide Nakagawa River in Tochigi Prefecture, my hometown, with then-*Yotaro*. I jumped into the river, but he did not from fear and instead barked and ran around on the shore. The following spring we had several complaints from our neighbor farmers saying that my dog was ruining the rice fields that they had just finished rice planting. They said, "you need to solve this." Once I got to the rice field, my *Yotaro* was running around off his leash and into the rice field water. How *Yotaro* overcame his fear of water became a topic of discussion among the neighbors.

Yotaro became a leader figure among the neighboring folks and sometimes brought his junior dogs to my house at mealtimes. Even though when I intended to give *Yotaro* a meal, he would give it to his juniors, and they would give me a grateful look as if they were saying "thank you" to me.

Akita dogs own its grandeur which all my *Yotaro's* cannot even come close to; their regal posture connotes blood connection to wolves with ears standing straight up, nose stretching up in air, and eyes staring firmly with a taciturn demeanor. All my *Yotaro's* unfortunately did not possess any of these features, however, he never lost his passion to play with me, always had absolute trust in me, and seemed to always enjoy being around me.

The most recent famous dog must be *Masaru*, who belongs to the Olympic Russian figure skater, Alina Zagitova. *Masaru* is very much an ambassador and representing the whole of Akita to the world. It has been more than 60 years since I spent my time with *Yotaro*, and I recall how much I like dogs since I came to Akita. Every time I encounter gorgeous Akita dogs, they evoke a sense of awe in me.



鈴木 典比古

This article was originally posted on Asahi Shimbun local version dated March 18th, 2019. Read the original article here (only in Japanese).
<http://www.asahi.com/area/akita/articles/MTW20190318051550001.html>

President Norihiko Suzuki, DBA