

皆さん、お早うございます。私は、貴校、ポート・オブ・サクラメント補習授業校の、第 34 回卒業式で講演する機会を頂いて、林ヶ谷先生と貴校の役員の方々に、感謝したいと思います。そして、私は本日卒業されるすべての学生を、温かく祝福させて頂きたいと思います。あなた方は長い間、目標を達成するために、一生懸命勉強されてきたと思います。

Good morning. I would like to THANK Hayashigatani-sensei and the hard-working staff at Port of Sacramento Japanese School for the kind invitation to speak at this 34th Commencement Ceremony. And I want to warmly CONGRATULATE all the students who are graduating today. You have worked long and hard to achieve your goal, and we are all very proud of you.

この学校の重要な目的は、日本の言語と文化によって、地球市民を育成することでしょう。私は 20 年以上にわたり、日本と関わってきましたので、私の日本関連の経験の概要を、提供したいと思います。貴校の卒業生は世界の市民として、個々の経路で、新たな人生の節目を迎えられました。おそらく、私の経験が、卒業生の皆さんに小さな教訓を、与えられると良いと思います。まずは日本語で話しますが、その後は、少しだけ英語で話します。

The important purpose of your school is to foster Global Citizenship using the Japanese language and culture. I have been involved with Japan for more than 20 years, so I would like to provide an overview of my Japan-related experiences. I will speak first in Japanese and then add a few words in English. Perhaps my experience will hold some small lessons for today's graduates, as you are just starting out on your individual pathways as citizens of the world.

父親はアメリカ空軍の将校だったので、私の家族はアイダホ州、オハイオ州、インディアナ州、テキサス州、ニューヨーク州と、やっと、カリフォルニア州に住んでいました。（四人兄弟ですが、私の方はグッド・モーニング州で生まれました。それは勿論オハヨウ州ですね。）高校時代に拳法空手を勉強し、それがきっかけで、初めて日本に興味を持つようになりました。この CSUS での大学生の時、私の関心は、東洋哲学と禅仏教の方に向きました。大学の専攻を 2 回変えて、4 年制大学を卒業するのは、私の場合 6 年間かかりました。

My father was a career officer in the United States Air Force, so before moving to California my family lived in Idaho, Ohio, Indiana, Texas and New York. (I was born in the “good morning state,” which we all know is OHAYO!) I first became interested in Japan during high school, when I began taking kenpo karate lessons. As a college student here at CSUS, my interests turned toward Eastern philosophy and Zen Buddhism. I changed my major a couple of times, and finally received my 4-year college degree—after a total of 6 years.

そのジャーナリズムの学位を取得した後、北カリフォルニアで新聞記者として働いておりましたが、私はより多くの冒険をしたいと憧れを持ち、ジャパン・エクスチェンジ・アンド・ティーチング（つまりジェット）プログラムを通して、私は日本の青森県へ行きました。本州の「最北端の最北端」という多くの山がある下北半島で、美しい漁村に住んで、地元の中学校で英語を教えました。下北の有名な「雪猿」は、寒い冬の間天然温泉で風呂に入ります。（しかし、私はその温泉に入った時、すべてのサルはすぐに飛び出しました！）

I worked as a newspaper reporter after getting that Journalism degree from Sac State, but I yearned for more adventure. So through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (or JET) Program, I went to Aomori Prefecture to teach English in a scenic fishing village on the Shimokita Peninsula, at the northernmost tip of Japan’s main island. That area is famous for its “snow monkeys,” which bath in natural hot springs, or onsen, during the cold winters. (But when I entered the onsen, all the monkeys quickly jumped out!)

青森での2年間の生活経験は、より深く色々な面で、日本人を尊敬する機会を与えてくれました。東北の伝統的な暮らしの尊厳と単純さ、チームワークやコミュニティへの印象的な焦点、地域の素晴らしい自然の美しさ。私の中学生の教え子達は、本日の何人かの卒業生と同じぐらいの年齢でした。そこでの思い出は、今も、胸に残っています。教師と学生同士に対する尊重、毎日の日課として行われていた給食当番や、掃除を努力し行っていたこと。学校行事やクラブ活動の時の騒がしい笑い声が、今でも、忘れられません。

More seriously, my 2 years in Aomori made me deeply admire the Japanese people: the dignity and simplicity of Tohoku’s traditional ways of life, the

impressive focus on teamwork and community, and of course the region's incredible natural beauty. My junior high school students there were about the same age as some of today's graduates. I have fond memories of those students both in and out of the classroom: their respect for teachers and each other, their cooperation in serving the same lunch to everyone and cleaning the entire school every afternoon, their noisy laughter during school festivals and club activities (and sometimes during our English classes).

1993年に、私はサクラメントに戻って、CSUSで政治学を勉強する為に修士課程に入り、初めて林ヶ谷先生にお会いしました。青森で津軽弁に囲まれた結果、私の日本語のリスニング能力はかなり良かったです。しかし林ヶ谷先生の日本語のクラスで、津軽弁は標準語と「違う」のだと分かって、ビックリしました。その時から、私は漢字を体系的に学び始めました。

I returned to Sacramento in 1993 and met Hayashigatani-sensei for the first time, when I began pursuing a master's degree in Government here at CSUS. Having been immersed in the mysterious Tsugaru dialect, my Japanese listening ability was quite good. But in Hayashigatani-sensei's Japanese class, I quickly discovered that Tsugaru-ben was NOT standard spoken Japanese. I also began studying kanji in a systematic way for the first time.

先生と私は、共通の分野に関心を持っていたので、先生のオフィスで話に花が咲き、長くとりとめのない会話を楽しみました。林ヶ谷先生は数冊の本を書かれて、日本と米国のマスメディアの比較研究の専門家であります。私は、林ヶ谷先生のような高いレベルには達しておりませんが、朝日イブニング・ニュースという日本の英字新聞に多数の記事を、投稿したことがありました。

Sensei and I shared various mutual interests, so we enjoyed many long and meandering conversations in his office. He has written several books, and is an expert on the comparative study of Mass Media in Japan and the U.S., while I had worked as a reporter and written freelance articles for the Asahi Evening News.

私の修士論文は、第二次世界大戦中に起こった、日系アメリカ人の強制収容所問題への謝罪と賠償運動というテーマでした。カリフォルニア州などから強制立ち退き、そして米国中部に抑留された日系アメリカ人は、80年代に国家の謝罪と金

銭的補償をもらいました。私は 1995 年に、サクラメント・ニュース・アンド・レビューという新聞のために、このトピックについてのカバーストーリーを、投稿しました。この表紙では、林ヶ谷先生ご自身の手書きの「帰郷」という大きい漢字があります。私は、出版の締め切りの直前に依頼しましたが、先生は筆で、この漢字の綺麗な見本を、提供頂きました。

My master's thesis was about the Japanese American redress movement, which resulted in a national apology and monetary compensation for the ethnic Japanese who were forcibly interned during World War Two. In 1995 I wrote a cover story on this topic for the Sacramento News & Review called "Homecoming." This kanji on the cover, kikyou, was based on the handwriting of Hayashigatani-sensei (who responded to my request for a kanji sample just before the newspaper's publishing deadline).

部分的に先生が書いた寛大な推薦状のおかげで、私は 1997 年に、福岡の久留米工業大学での教員として、日本に帰ることができました。その後、福岡女学院大学に移りましたが、合計 11 年間、その二つの九州である大学で、英語と英語関連科目を教えました。夏休み中にサクラメントに戻って来た時は、いつも林ヶ谷先生に連絡しました。二人で日本とアメリカの社会問題や政治問題を議論し、私たちのそれぞれの作業中の研究プロジェクトを、説明し合いました。いつも先生に昼食を「ご馳走して頂き」、私が先生にご馳走する番は回ってきませんでした。

(笑) 今日の卒業式も、「食事付き」だと聞きましたが。。。

Thanks in part to Sensei's generous letter of recommendation, in 1997 I was able to return to Japan as a faculty member at Kurume Institute of Technology in Fukuoka. I later moved to Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University, teaching English and related subjects at those two universities in Kyushu for a total of 11 years. Whenever I came back to Sacramento during summer vacations, I always got together with Hayashigatani-sensei to discuss whatever research and writing projects we were each working on at the time. Somehow it was always Sensei's turn to buy me lunch!

2007 年に、まだ大学でフルタイム教えながら、私は九州大学大学院の法学部で「政治学博士」を取得しました。私の博士論文は、第二次世界大戦に関連する「歴史的正義の問題」を、検討しました。(ちなみに、北東アジアの歴史問題についての、私が執筆した多くの記事は、ジャパン・フォーカスのウェブサイト

載っています。)九州大学を卒業する 2007 年は、間違いなく、私の全盛期の時でした。

In 2007, while still teaching full-time, I completed a Ph.D. in Political Science at Kyushu University. My dissertation examined historical justice issues related to World War Two that, sadly, continue to negatively impact the geopolitics of Northeast Asia today. (Much of my writing about these issues is online at the Japan Focus website.) Graduating from Kyudai was definitely my highlight of 2007.

しかし、それはまた「悲劇の年」でもありました。5年前、クリスマスちょうど前に、私の日本人の妻は福岡で、ガンを患い亡くなりました。利恵という博多美人は、その時 37 歳でしたが、私たちの女の子はわずか 1 歳でした。そして、2008 年に、ビクトリア心という私の娘と一緒に、サクラメントに帰ってきました。私の母親と「3 世代世帯」で、健全に暮らしています。6 歳の娘、心は今、カトリックの小学校で、元気な 1 年生です。ピアノで「さくらさくら」を演奏することを、学んでいます。

That was also a year of tragedy, however. Five years ago, just before Christmas, my Japanese wife died of cancer in Fukuoka. Rie was just 37 years old and our daughter, Victoria Kokoro, was just 1. So Kokoro-chan and I moved home to Sacramento in 2008; we have been living with my mother in a 3-generational household since then. The healing process took time and required various adjustments, but we are all doing well. My daughter is now 6 years old and in 1st grade at a great Catholic school. She's also learning to play "Sakura Sakura" on the piano.

一昨年まで、ローズビルである NEC エレクトロニクスの半導体工場で、日本語翻訳・通訳という仕事をしておりましたが、今は、カリフォルニア州の公務員として、広報関係の業務をしています。九州生まれの娘の心は、日本とアメリカの両方のパスポートを持ち、私はまだ日本の永住ビザを持っています。今年後半に、福岡の親戚を訪問する予定です。実は、今から 20 年、円ドル為替レートに応じて、退職後、私は日本で生活を送る可能性があります。私は、太平洋を行き来弾む「ピンポンボール」になりたいと思います。

After working as a Japanese translator at NEC Electronics in Roseville, I am now working in public affairs for the State of California. My daughter Koko has

both Japanese and American passports, while I still have a Japanese permanent residency visa. We are planning to visit our Japanese relatives in Fukuoka later this year. In fact, depending on the yen-dollar exchange rate 20 years from now, I may even retire back in Japan—like a ping-pong ball bouncing back and forth across the Pacific Ocean.

I will close by offering just a couple of suggestions for today's graduates in English only.

I hope you will become ping-pong balls too! It is OK to change directions in your life. Alternate between working and going back to school—be a lifelong student of whatever you like. Always be doing two or three or four things “on the side.”

Be adventurers and explorers! Travel as much as possible, especially when you are young—and try to break away from the tour group. A great thing about living in Japan for 13 years was that I could visit other Asian countries.

Hayashigatani-sensei is a better example of someone going outside his “comfort zone” and taking some “life risks.” He was still in his 20s when he moved to America—at a time when not many Japanese were making that leap. Thanks to his adventurous spirit and the seeds he planted, thousands of Americans and Japanese—including you—now understand each other better.

My 3 years of studying Japanese in Hayashigatani-sensei's classes here at Sac State were invaluable. However, an independent drive for active “self-study”, or 独学, is needed to achieve the goal of foreign language fluency. Also, the concept of “delayed gratification”—working hard and making sacrifices today in order to achieve some goal or reward in the future—is a traditional part of the Japanese character. This means studying kanji even when you would rather be playing video games on the iPad.

Another suggestion: Don't worry if it sometimes FEELS like you are not making any progress in your Japanese study. There will be alternating cycles of “dry periods” (when you do not notice any improvement) and “breakthrough

periods” (when everything seems to come together). Do not pay too much attention to these cycles.

When I lived in Japan, I saw many other foreigners move to the country and begin studying Japanese with great energy and enthusiasm. These 外人さん would dive into hiragana and katakana, make some initial progress, and then start on kanji. But when they hit the first “dry cycle,” they usually got discouraged and abandoned their Japanese studies forever. They quit before the breakthrough came.

My final suggestion, I promise. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes: that is one part of the Japanese character that is counterproductive for language learning. The Japanese college students in my English classes in Fukuoka were usually pretty good at the “receptive skills” of reading and listening, but not so good at the key “productive skill” of speaking—due to the fear of making mistakes.

I remember visiting Vietnam for vacation in the early 1990s, before many tourists went there. I was amazed at the Vietnamese I met there. They were very eager to speak English, and they communicated effectively despite lots of errors. For them English was a practical tool for social interaction, not some test subject at school. So, in your Japanese studies and in your life, please make many, many mistakes! And once again, CONGRATULATIONS on your graduation、おめでとうございます!!! ... Thank you.

END

Speaker bio

William Underwood’s first two years in Japan were spent teaching English at junior high schools in Aomori Prefecture, as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. He later taught English and related subjects for 11 years at Kurume Institute of Technology and Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University. He received a Ph.D. in Political Science in 2007 from Kyushu University, where he researched historical justice issues related to World War II. He has been quoted regarding his research by media organizations such as The Economist, the New York Times, Reuters, and Voice of America. He has spoken at the

Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, Stanford University, and George Washington University. Both his master's degree in Government (1996) and his bachelor's degree in Journalism (1988) were received from California State University, Sacramento. He formerly worked as a Japanese translator at NEC's semiconductor facility in Roseville, and as a newspaper reporter in northeastern California. His freelance articles have appeared in publications such as American Legion Magazine, Asahi Evening News, Far Eastern Economic Review, Rotarian, South China Morning Post, and World & I. He currently works in public affairs for the State of California (while maintaining a Japan permanent residency visa). His website is williamunderwood.org.