

# My Twenty Years of Teaching Career at Surugadai University

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I started teaching English as a full time professor here at Surugadai University in April, 1995. The old proverb is right that says, "Time flies like an arrow." This period of 20 years has passed just like an arrow. I started my teaching career as an English teacher and dormitory superintendent at a municipal boarding high school in Tokyo, in April 1969 when I graduated from university. Since then, I have been teaching English for 44 years except when I was studying abroad and doing some overseas research. I have had enough failures and mistakes regarding teaching, research, and students' guidance. I have to confess that I have not been qualified to teach at a university level. This day of my retirement, however, has finally come with favorable and unfavorable criticism and comments and encouragement from my dear fellow professors and terrific staff members. Above all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to quite a number of students I have met in and out of classrooms. I do not ever deny having hurt their feelings regardless of any teaching situations. I hope they will accept my millions of apologies.

What concerned me most with are Questions and Answers in the teaching context. They can easily answer their classmates about the textbooks, or guest speakers I have often invited to my classes about their stories. It seems, however, that they are very poor in making questions. This remains still as a big problem for me. Another is to put my family motto into practice; "Try to rejoice all the time, never cease to pray, and to give thanks in everything." (1 Thessalonians 5:16~18)

In April every year I began my classes with our self-introductions, where one of the questions, inevitably, asked by the students was, "Why did you become a teacher?" I had three answers to this question. First, Father was a grade school teacher. I met an excellent teacher when I was in the third year of a junior high school and I wanted very much to be like him. The other reason was I had been so much moved by the book, "きけわだつみのこえ" *Listen to the voices from the sea* (by Kobunsha, Kappa Novels 1959). On the first page written was, "Sleep a peaceful sleep, since we will not repeat the same errors!" and that is also on the monument in front of the Atomic Bomb Memorial Dome in Hiroshima. I have wanted as a teacher to pass on that any war destroys our personalities and causes tragedies, and that we should never let it happen again.

I have cherished lots of memories of these 20 years. Among them, I still have vivid memories of the overseas studies I was in charge of. Those students and the programs in Canada, the U.S., and Australia varied completely, however, there was one thing in common. That is, all the students without any exceptions who joined the programs returned home fully grown up in terms of self-reliance. A proverb, "To see is to believe" is right to reflect that they became equipped with the tools to manage themselves when in difficult situations. To my regret, I have had few opportunities to take young people to Asian countries. Since Japan is located in Asia, I would like them to pay more attention to Asian countries.

Last, but not least, I would like to say "Thank you to my wife Esther Rie!" who has made my life of a teacher colorful due to her wisdom and constant support.

My final words will be in a Haiku. 「名残惜し 桜並木の このよき日」

"My heart remains here

In full-bloom of Cherry Trees

On this awesome day"

Thank you very much.