

“ Youthful Days - Memories from a Youth Hostel ”

Whenever the season of school trips comes around each year,
I am reminded of the poem:

“Aoni-yoshi, Nara no miyako ha saku hana no
nioi ga gotoku ima sakari nari.”

It means, roughly, that “the capital of Nara is now in full bloom, like flowers in their finest fragrance.”

Forty-seven years ago, when I was a third-year junior high school student, my homeroom teacher introduced us to this poem during a pre-trip lesson for our school excursion. Some of you may have heard it before. At that time, as a young student, I simply imagined Nara as a place beautifully adorned with flowers.

However, when I actually visited Nara, I found that, outside the central area, the landscape was mostly fields and farmland. It was a truly quiet town. There was no visible trace of the former glory of the ancient capital. Yet, even without its past splendor, visiting places such as Horyu-ji Temple, Todai-ji Temple, and Nara Park led me to reflect on the people who had once worked, lived, and devoted themselves there at the time of their construction.

Our school trip lasted only a few days, and I felt it was not enough. The following summer, as a first-year high school student, I returned to the Kansai region with friends. We took our time exploring Nara on foot. Even now, it feels as if those days were only yesterday.

The theme of this piece is “Youth.” For me, all I could think about when I was young was travel. In fact, that spirit continues even today.

Back then, traveling with “youth hostels” was very popular among young people. Let me briefly explain what a youth hostel is. A youth hostel is an accommodation facility designed primarily for young travelers. The cost was very low—about 2,000 yen per night including meals at that time. Each hostel was carefully managed by a resident manager, often called a “parent,” which made it a safe and reliable place to stay.

Youth hostels also had another great appeal: guests stayed in shared rooms. Because of this, one could meet a wide variety of people. Youth hostels existed in every prefecture in Japan as well as in many countries around the world.

My trip to the Kansai region during my first year of high school was, for me, my first great adventure away from home. Even now, I vividly remember the excitement and nervous anticipation I felt at that time.

The first youth hostel I stayed at was a temple called Mudo-ji, located deep in the mountains of Hyogo Prefecture. “A temple?” you might be surprised to hear. In fact, quite a number of temples operated youth hostels in those days.

Many of the guests were high school or university students, and after dinner there would be a meeting organized by the hostel “parent,” the manager. During these gatherings, we introduced ourselves, sang songs together, danced, and listened to stories about the local traditions and culture. The atmosphere was lively and full of energy.

When I stayed at a youth hostel in Abashiri, Hokkaido, I shared a room with a traveler from Vancouver, Canada. We quickly became friends and spent the entire night talking about our schools, our friends, and the differences between our cultures. Before long, we exchanged addresses and kept in touch. At that time, there was no email, and international phone calls were very expensive, so we corresponded by post mail.

Eventually, I had the opportunity to visit Vancouver. While I was there, he kindly took me to various places by car. Of all my experiences in Vancouver, what do you think surprised me the most? It was the amount of food Canadian young people ate in a single meal. One day, I was invited to lunch at a restaurant with him and his friends. I was astonished to see them finish, with ease, portions several times larger than what I normally ate.

Today, in our school's educational activities, we aim to foster what we call “programming thinking.” Although this was many decades ago, during experiences such as school trips, we naturally developed similar ways of thinking. We identified our own challenges—such as keeping travel costs low or inviting friends to join us—and experimented with different approaches to solve them. When we encountered difficulties or failures, we continued to try various solutions, overcoming obstacles through determination and enthusiasm.

Through these experiences, we set even higher goals for ourselves. In a sense, even before the age of computers, we were already engaging in what could be called “programming thinking.” Perhaps we might call it “device-free programming.” During our youth, this kind of thinking ability grows rapidly and naturally.

Principal



Yasuhiro Takashio



八中だより



第7号

令和8年7月1日

府中市立

府中第八中学校

7月1日は
国民安全の日

〈在籍生徒数〉 一学年231名、二学年249名、三学年218名
全校生徒数698名
〈学校住所・電話番号〉
〒182-0035 府中市四谷一丁目二八二七
電話 〇四二(三六四)一八八一

★地域の方から中学生の皆さんがボランティアに参画してくれています、というメッセージが届いています。

