

Visiting the Kasetsu (Temporary) Residence

Visit to the East Temporary Residence in Sasaya

I joined the group of 22 high school girls of Sakura no Seibo with their teacher, to visit the Kasetsu (meaning “temporary residence”) in Sasaya, Fukushima. There we also ran into a group of Fukushima University students who were visiting to offer the service a service of a nice hot foot bath to the residents. The 182 Kasetsu units are occupied by people from Namie. They are allowed to keep their pets with them in some of those houses, which is a great comfort and consolation for them. This particular Kasetsu is situated in the middle of a residential area, and there is a nice, large park nearby, as well as a shopping area, schools and hospitals, and above all, the railway station is in walking distance. There is a red lamp at the door of each elderly person living alone, to be turned on in case of emergency. We were told that, in this Kasetsu area, there are also 50 children under high school age. The people have formed a residents’ association, functioning very efficiently and working successfully to make a good local community.

I went for a walk to the park, with those who responded to the invitation of the Sakura no Seibo students. Some of the elderly residents had difficulty in walking, but they were happy to come with us. After the walk, we sat down with those who had taken a foot bath, and some young people joined us, too. Everyone had a nice, relaxed smile, after the soothing massage by the young, gentle hands of the university students. I was convinced that the basic element of good human relations is a loving touch of hands.

Mr. K and Mrs. Y said that they could trust neither the government nor the Tokyo Electric Power Company, and that they decided to go to a newly built residence instead of returning to Namie, their native place. They also said that they had just begun to enjoy the satisfactory human relations of such a lovely group, which they would hate to give up. “I really love my home town and would love to return there, but I hate to leave this present group which I have come to love.” said Mr. K in an unexpected cheerful tone. The residents treated us with Namie Yakisoba, which was a pleasant surprise for us

(Photo: The opening area owned by Fukushima Prefecture, before the present Kasetsu was built.)

Labor at the Nuclear Power Plant

I received a copy of the publication from Kawasaki Wednesday Patrol Group, their special

issue called “My Experience of Working at the Nuclear Power Plant”, which was issued on August 1, 2011. It was a summary of interviews with the street people who had the experience of working at the nuclear power plant within the past 10 years. Mixed feelings crossed my mind as I read the description of those workers who talked so openly about their situation even before the accident of the First Atomic Plant of Fukushima: —how they cleaned the pipes, how they heard the warning sound of the radiation dosage machine, how they worked with Philippino workers, and so on. I was quite impressed that even before the accident of the First Atomic Plant of Fukushima, the youngest worker aged 18 remembered the older workers saying to him, “You are still young. Don’t come in further than here. Let me go in alone.” Yes, even before the accident, the workers knew about the dangerous zone. In spite of all that, no one faced the reality seriously at that time as we reflect back now.

Equipment to Test Exposed Radiation on Babies

“Baby Scan” to Examine the Internal Radiation of Babies and Infants

The tests by the Whole Body Counter (WBC) for the internal exposure have been performed since 2011. It was “scientifically inconceivable” that only the infants, excluding their parents, would be contaminated by radiation. So there had been no such thing as the WBC examination for babies and infants only. However, the parents of small children always expressed their anxiety. They contended that scientists were hesitant to use the WBC for infants too small in size for the machine they used. Then, the specialists invented a testing machine for the children smaller than 130 cm. The first “Baby Scan” in the world was introduced to Hirata Chuo Hospital in Hirata Mura, Ishikawa Gun, Fukushima, on December 2, 2013, and the use of the machine was offered free of charge. Instead of the examination in the vertical position like for adults, the children to receive the test would lie down, and receive the oral instruction from the side. When lying on their back, they can see the picture of the comic character Ampan Man, and lying on stomach, through the eye pad they can watch animations or play the piano in imagination, and thus enjoy themselves while going through the test. Prof. Hayano of Tokyo University reports that among the 500 children whom he tested from December 2 till mid January, there was no record of contamination.

The result of the measurement is given to the family of each child on the same day, and the medical staff will explain the information of the test carefully. The test for children will start in Iwaki Hospital as of May, 2014, and in Soma General Hospital in Minami Soma City as of July.

(Photo: A medical staff member prepares the Baby Scan machine — taken from *Fukushima Minpo*, July 1, 2014.)

Not Going Home

The reasons the people gave as to why they have decided not to return to their place of origin are as follows: (Where they had more than one response, priority was given to the higher rates.)

	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨	⑩	⑪	⑫	⑬
Kawamata	49.3	36	49.3	48	34.7	48	18.7	29.3	22.7	22.7	30.7	50.7	32
Minamisoma	48.7	64.1	53.5	52.2	54.5	48.8	30.7	30.5	23.1	31.2	33.5	38.2	34.4
Iidate	72.8	42.8	51	53.5	45.9	45.4	12.9	38.1	26.9	23.2	32.3	51	32.5
Naraha	50.9	70.2	54.3	54.5	65.8	47	18.9	35.3	26.8	28.7	19.6	—	30.4
Namie	62	68.9	68.4	60.5	62.3	53.3	42.7	36	31.7	36.2	53.1	37.2	37.4
Ookuma	73.2	71.2	67	69.1	68.3	58	45.3	29.5	28.4	39.8	64.8	33.4	40.1
Katurao	61	59	66	46	55	38	28	46	36	28	33	50	26
Tomiooka	67.7	67.3	64.3	65.5	63.9	52.6	41.7	31.8	29	35.7	55.9	40.7	36.8
Futaba	67.6	69.5	66.7	65.7	64.8	57.9	46.3	30.6	30.1	38.9	67.6	39.2	37

- ① Anxiety because radioactive dosage does not go down.
- ② Anxiety of insecurity of the nuclear power plant.
- ③ Anxiety of the safety of drinking water.
- ④ Insecurity of business recovery.
- ⑤ Insecurity of the medical environment.
- ⑥ Deterioration of their own houses — unable to live there.
- ⑦ Insecurity of traffic infrastructure.
- ⑧ Traffic inconvenience.
- ⑨ No hope of getting a job even if they returned.
- ⑩ Misgivings about nursing care service
- ⑪ Too long a time needed for preparation for returning.
- ⑫ Greater convenience for general life in the present location.
- ⑬ The probability of other residents from here not returning.

(Taken from the investigation by the National Agency of Reconstruction — concerning the inhabitants' intention in the devastated areas.)

Abukuma Extracts (Taken from an essay in *Fukushima Minpo*, July 14)

“Furusato”— “My home town”, the word which I see and hear so often since *that day*, the day of the earthquake. Furusato! Before *that day*, this word used to bring me a warm feeling that would spread immediately in my whole being whenever I heard it. But now, what a sad, lonely feeling it causes me!

Let me tell you about one woman's experience of "Furusato". After the atomic accident, she had to leave Okuma Machi her Furusato, to live in Aizu Wakamatsu. This spring, she moved back to Iwaki City to join the rest of her family. There had been a span of a little more than three years when she had to live alone in Aizu, due to her job. Now she can live with her husband and children again. Although she is back in her Furusato area, the memory of the beloved hours and years she spent in the snow country of Aizu occasionally come back to her mind as something very dear to her. She asks herself, "What makes me feel this way?"

The writer of this article shares the woman's sentiments and expresses it as follows. "I, too, visit Aizu when I have business there from time to time. As I drive through Ban'etsu Highway and begin to see the top of Mt. Bandai, I say to myself "Oh, I am back here again." When I pass Higashiyama Onsen, I say to myself "Oh, I was sheltering at this hotel from the explosion. I also used to look at that waterfall over there." Thus I relish lingering on various memories. Some friends of mine would be waiting for my occasional visits, too. The new experience, "home away from home". The days that seemed to be a temporary sojourn for me became certainly an experience of making a valuable home. Yes, "home" with no doubt. It is a word calling forth a warm resonance in our heart. This process showed me an example of what happens in the heart of a person spending a prolonged temporary life living in a different place. Let us cultivate our sensitivity to the nuance of the words that we seem to use as if feeling nothing about them."