

# まぼろしの母校

## MY PHANTOM ALMA MATER

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### まぼろしの母校

1994年2月、シンガポール日本人学校中学部の卒業式に来賓として出席した。気温が上がる午後を避け、式典は午前中に行われた。当時の体育館には冷房がなく、暑がりの私は背広にネクタイという正装で額の汗をぬぐいながら、式辞や祝辞に耳を傾けていた。

私は日本人会の事務局長として日本人学校の理事会に加わっており、入学式や卒業式には毎回、来賓として招かれていた。当時、日本人学校は小中あわせて生徒数が2,000人を優に超え、世界最大規模の日本人学校であった。

その日の来賓挨拶には、1994年度日本人会長の平田 坦(ひろし)氏が登壇された。同氏は人望が厚く、気さくでユーモアに富み、多くの人から慕われていた方である。会長任期の途中で社命により帰国されることになり、私は心から残念に思い、その気持ちを私信に込めて同氏お送りしたことがある。

ここに掲載する祝辞は、父の死を知った時の平田少年の無念の思いが託された卒業生へのメッセージである。額の汗をぬぐったハンカチを脇にあてながら、聞いた。氏の温かな人柄がにじむ内容であり、今も心に残るスピーチである。

(平田会長中学校卒業式祝辞の抜粋)

『一さて、私は本日の卒業式に特別の思いをもって出席させていただいております。私事で恐縮ですが、先ずその話を聞いて下さい。もし私の運命の歯車が狂っていなかったら、私自身子供の頃シンガポール日本人学校に入学していた、即ち皆さん方の先輩になっていたはずなのです。

今から約半世紀前、日本は世界の国々を相手に戦争を始めていました。その頃私の父は勤めていました会社からシンガポール支店勤務の命令を受け、船でこの地に向ったのです。当時は航空機は未だ発達していなかったため、海外への転勤は船だったのです。その船にはたくさんの会社から東南アジアに転勤する人が多勢乗っていましたが、この事が敵側に知れるところとなって父が乗っていた船は潜水艦の攻撃を受けて沈没し、父はシンガポールを見ることなく海の藻屑となってしまいました。父がシンガポールに到着したら、すぐ後から私達家族も出発し、私はシンガポール日本人学校に入学することとなっていたのですが、その夢は父の戦死と共にはかなく消えてしまいました。

それから幾星霜、年月を経て私は社会人となり、父が来る事が出来なかったシンガポールにやってきて仕事をする事になり、しかも本日は私のまぼろしの母校であります日本人学校から招かれて中学部の卒業式に出席させていただいているということで、誠に感無量なのであります。私が敢えて個人的な事をここで話したのは現代の世の中で国際性、国際協調、国際交流といったことがいかに大切かということを皆さんと考えたかったのです。

もし五十年前、日本にたくさんの国際人がおり、特に指導的な人達が国際的な見地から判断をすることができていたなら、決してあの様な大戦争は起さなかったと思うのです。つい数年前にも中東戦争がありましたし、今でも世界の色々な国が紛争を起しています。このような問題を起している国々はほとんど例外なく、世界との十分な交流をせず、心を閉ざしている国々です。

私は父を戦争で亡くしましたが、当時はそういう不幸な家庭がたくさんありましたし、戦災で家を焼かれた人もたくさんいました。永い間食料が不足して日本中の人々は皆毎日毎日ひもじい日々を送っていました。戦争は大変悲惨な事で、私はもはもう二度とあの様なつらい目に合いたくないし若い世代の人たちにも合わせたくありません。

きょう皆さんは中学校を卒業されるわけですが人生の勉強はまだまだこれから始まるところです。これから上級学校へ進まれてもさらに社会に出てからも勉強が続きます。

しかし勉強の目的は決して自分だけの出世の為とか、自分だけがお金持になる為といった心の狭いものであってはいけません。日本の為にというのでも今の世の中では狭隘な心です。これからの人達は世界的な見地に立って世の為、人の為になろうという大きな目標を掲げて自分をみがいていただきたいと思うのです。幸い皆さんは若くして早くも国際人です。シンガポールでこちらの人たちと知り合いになり、心が通じ合う様になったと思います。又周辺の国々へも出かけて様子が判ったはずです。先程川村大使が云われたように外国から日本を見ることもできました。

どうかシンガポールで勉強し、生活をした経験を大いに活かし、さらに勉強を積み、豊かで平和な二十一世紀を築く主役となるべく研鑽を積んでいただきたいと思うのです。———』

## **My Phantom Alma Mater**

In February 1994, I attended the graduation ceremony of the junior high division of the Singapore Japanese School as a guest. To avoid the rising temperatures of the afternoon, the ceremony was held in the morning. At that time, the school gymnasium had no air-conditioning, and being sensitive to heat, I found myself repeatedly wiping the sweat from my brow as I listened to the speeches and congratulatory addresses in a suit and tie.

As the Secretary-General of the Japanese Association, I served on the school's board of directors and was invited as a guest to every entrance and graduation ceremony. In those days, the Singapore Japanese School had more than 2,000 students across its primary and secondary divisions, making it the largest Japanese school in the world.

That day's guest address was delivered by Mr. Hiroshi Hirata, the President of the Japanese Association for the 1994 term. He was a man of great warmth and integrity—approachable, good-humored, and widely respected. Although his term as president was still underway, he was suddenly recalled to Japan by his company. I felt deeply disappointed at his departure and once sent him a personal letter expressing those sentiments.

The congratulatory address presented here is a message Mr. Hirata dedicated to the graduating students, rooted in the poignant sorrow he felt as a young boy upon learning of his father's death. I listened to it with my handkerchief—still damp from wiping my brow—held lightly to my eyes. The warmth of his character radiated through every word, and it remains a speech I remember vividly to this day.

**“— Now, I would like to say that I am attending today's graduation ceremony with very special feelings. Please allow me to begin with a personal story.**

**Had the course of my life not taken a different turn, I myself would have entered the Singapore Japanese School as a child—that is to say, I would have become one of your seniors. About half a century ago, Japan embarked on a war against many nations of the world. At that time, my father received an assignment from his company to work at its Singapore branch and set sail for this land.**

**In those days, aviation had not yet developed, and overseas transfers were made by ship. Many people from various companies who were bound for Southeast Asia were on board the same vessel. Unfortunately, this information became known to the enemy, and the ship on which my father was traveling was attacked by a submarine and sunk. My father perished at sea without ever setting foot in Singapore.**

Had my father safely settled in Singapore, our family was to have followed soon after, and I was scheduled to enroll in the Singapore Japanese School. That dream, however, vanished with my father's death in the war.

Many years passed. I grew up, entered society, and eventually came to Singapore—the place my father was never able to reach—to work. And today, I have been invited by my “phantom alma mater,” the Japanese School, to attend this junior high school graduation ceremony. I am truly filled with deep emotion.

I have spoken of these personal matters because I wished to think together with you about how important international-mindedness, international cooperation, and international exchange are in the world today.

If, fifty years ago, Japan had possessed more internationally minded people—especially leaders capable of making judgments from a global perspective—I believe that such a devastating war would never have occurred. Even just a few years ago, there was a war in the Middle East, and even today conflicts continue to break out in various parts of the world. Almost without exception, the countries that cause such problems are those that fail to engage sufficiently with the world and keep their hearts closed to others.

I lost my father to war, but in those days there were countless families who suffered the same tragedy. Many people lost their homes to air raids, and for a long time food was scarce, forcing people throughout Japan to endure hunger day after day. War is an unspeakable tragedy. I never wish to experience such suffering again, nor do I want the younger generation to be subjected to it.

Today you are graduating from junior high school, but the true study of life is only just beginning. Whether you advance to higher schools or enter society, learning will continue.

However, the purpose of study must never be something narrow-minded, such as seeking only personal success or wealth. Even studying solely “for Japan” is too limited in today's world. Those of you who will shape the future should adopt a global perspective and strive to serve the world and humanity as a whole, cultivating yourselves with that lofty goal in mind.

Fortunately, you have already become international citizens at a young age. Here in Singapore, you have met local people and built mutual understanding. You have also visited neighboring countries and gained firsthand knowledge of them. As Ambassador Kawamura mentioned earlier, you have been able to view Japan from abroad.

I sincerely hope that you will make full use of your experiences of studying and living in Singapore, continue to deepen your learning, and devote yourselves to becoming the leading contributors to the creation of a prosperous and peaceful twenty-first century.”

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