

[Translator Mitsko Suzuki's Comments:]

[I have decided to start introducing the series in *Aiken Journal* by **Mr. Shinkichi Kurimori** under the title of "**My 60 Years With The Akita-Inu**". Mr. Kurimori has passed away on April 15, 1974 (?) at the age of 81. At the time of his passing, *Aiken Journal* still had portions of his articles to last 6 more monthly series. We can assume the series was written by a person who saw first hand what took place and dipped himself entirely in the history of Akita-inu!

Out of 66 total pages, the following is the break-down by the subject:

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I will try to follow the outline as accurately as I can from the original text, and it is in no way the direct word-to-word translation, but the introduction of main subject in each section.]

My 60 Years With The Akita Inu

History:

The articles by the late Dr. Shozaburo Watase and a few other scholars are the only source of documented history of Japanese dogs, and personally I chose Dr. Watase's thesis as the most reliable study on the subject. "The ancient Japanese dogs can be divided into 3 lineages, Northern-most of which includes the lineages of Akita-inu.....large size pinto markings". It is not clear if it resembled Akita-inu, Ainu-inu, or the wild mixed dogs. It is in such a distant past ...of pre-stone ages, and no historical evidence is yet found how and when these Northern dogs migrated to Japanese archipelago. I am inclined to believe it was Ainu-inu. It is said that dogs are the first domesticated animal over 12,000 yrs ago in the new stone ages. In that primitive era, the hunting was the basis necessity of providing food and clothing. In one of the Persian scriptures it is stated "mankind owe greatly to the domesticated dogs for almost 6,000 yrs". In Japan the history of co-existence between mankind and dogs is at least a few thousand years old, when the Ezo-tribe (Ainu) was the main residents across Japan leading nomadic lives in the caves as far south as Kyushu or Shikoku islands. Dogs domesticated by the nomadic tribe followed their masters and assisted their hunting to secure their food and clothing.

In 660 B.C. the first Emperor Jimmu, the first emperor of Japan was enthroned in Yamato, the Southern part of Japan and gradually extended their territory towards the North, starting from 97 B.C. of the imperial prince's expedition to conquer the Kumaso (Ainu-tribe) towards the Northern Japan, subsequent attack alongside of Japan sea in 658 A.D. and in around 800 A.D. Ainu-tribe has completely been expelled from the mainland of Japan, ultimately forced to live in Hokkaido island. During this period when Ainu-tribe was retreating towards the North, the dogs belonged to their nomadic masters could have been left behind at various localities across their defeating trails. These dogs are assumed to be the ancestors of medium sized Japanese dogs. These medium sized dogs have since

acclimatized gradually depend of the area that they have settled. Akita-Matagi dog I see now is the derivatives of these medium size dogs, and yet they are so different from other medium sized Japanese dogs found in Osaka area, and retain the features of original Ainu-dog. I am convinced that Ainu-dog is the foundation of native Japanese dogs including Akita-matagis.

It is also assumed that our ancestors migrated from Eurasian continent or Southern islands in the Pacific. These migrants also could have brought in their companion dogs. With the increase of human population, the population and variety of dogs have also increased. The natural selection and breedings of descendents of Ainu-dogs and other Northern dogs of unknown origin, have contributed toward building the larger size in the Northern Japan. To enhance the working, hunting, and guarding abilities that are desperately needed at that time, larger dogs were more in demand, and consequently medium size dogs were starting to diminish in numbers. This was the trend in Akita region at that time.

However, in some isolated mountainous area, where the medium-sized hunting dogs were needed for the hunting of small games and birds, the effort had been made to preserve the medium size Matagi dog. It is only up to 50 years ago(100 yrs + from now) that Matagi-dog thus preserved were still in existence, and now regretfully the real Matagi are almost extinct. However, at this time of transition toward stabilization of Akita-inu, absorption of Matagi bloodlines into our only breed of dog in the area, Akita-inu, is definitely a contributing factor for the future.

Transition of Time:

Pre-Meiji Restoration era: The fame of Odate as dog town did not have to wait for Hachi-ko story. Odate was widely known as the place of "fighting dog" matches. Lord of Odate Castle, Satake clan was entrusted to govern the area by Tokugawa Shogunate after over 100 years of civil wars, during that time castle had changed its ownership for 8 times. Ieyasu Tokugawa with its superior shrewd ability to govern the entire Japan in the beginning of 17th century brought about 300 yrs of peace under his Shogunate. Lord Satake, however, was concerned of the loss of spirit amongst his samurais....invasion from the neighboring clans are always the threat. He has stipulated to raise large, stoic dogs with fearless fighting spirit. Wealthy landlords competed raising strong dogs and although there was distinctive class system of Warriors, Artisans, Farmers, and Merchants as a social order, dog ownership was allowed for any or those classes. As a matter of fact, the lower warrior class could not afford with their stipend to support a dog, and to solve this financial problem, a special bonus was offered to those who are willing to raise dogs, but was unable to do so. The people were joking the fact that dogs are paid much more than their low class warrior owners.

The location chosen for this "sports" was the east side of Odate castle, where most of the residents were Samurai class. According to what my grandfather(*) was telling me, there seems to have been a few dog fighting matches a year honored by the Lord. There are also monthly events authorized by the Lord for the ordinary citizens (farmers and merchants) to be able to participate. In the pre-Meiji restoration period, when the wish of the lord of the clan is the golden rule to follow, and if that wish is to raise the strong dogs and to prove their strength in the official occasions, all citizens of the area regarded this as showing their loyalty to the lord. After the power was returned from Tokugawa Shogunate to the Meiji Emperor in 1868, and as a result Samurai class has lost its supremacy over the other citizens, the "sports" of dog fighting was still carried on but the main operators was shifted away from Samurai class, and the location was changed to Tashiro Shrine area. Dog fighting sports as it had originated was strictly the imitation of Sumo wrestling. Participating dogs had their rankings like sumo wrestlers and prizes or certificate from Lord Satake was also recorded. All those recorded history had been burnt down with Odate castle in the civil war in 1867.

*(*Mr.Kurimori's grandfather mentioned here could be the person praised so highly in the History of Odate publication. Mr.Kichizaemon Kurimori was born in Odate in 1838. Moved to his mother's home town in Hokkaido after his father died when he was only 18 yrs old. Returned to Odate later, was a very prosperous entrepreneur in Odate. Because he himself did not have any education, and wanted to give the chances to the young students in Odate who are talented but could not afford to go to schools. Kurimori Educational*

Foundation was established in 1910, and over 100 students received scholarships from this Foundation to continue their schoolings. He passed away at the age of 77 in 1915.)

Tashiro-era: After the revolutionary modernization of Japan with Meiji restoration, the rapid development of the economy has given a better opportunity for common citizens to pursue pleasures. Although the power of samurai class dwindled, the farmers and merchants still were eager to carry on the tradition of this "spectator" sport. Although Samurai's loss of interest for creating strong and large dogs also affected the selective breeding practices, and dogs are allowed to roam and naturally select their mates, what is found in the pictures of dogs around 1900 does not show any changes of the quality of the local dogs. In a way, there was no mixed breed in Odate area, and natural selection could still maintained the same quality in the area. When the dog fighting sport had resumed in Tashiro shrine, the South end of the Odate, it was closer to the neighboring villages, and at the time when there was no other spectator sports like movies and theaters, this was the only recreation for the farmers in the neighboring villages, and all the families travel to the site with lunch boxes to enjoy the day. No admissions or gambling were involved and it was just a matter of watching the dogs as if watching boxing or wrestling matches in modern days.

En-yu-kai-era: Within the few years after the above mentioned Tashiro era, the organization called as above, which is literally translatable as "garden party" is started in around 1900. Approx.15 committee members have been selected (7 from Samurai class, 8 from Merchants). The new site is selected and the admission and entry fees were set. The total income for the day minus expenses have been evenly distributed to the owners of participating dogs. The ratio of distribution is determined by the ranks of each dogs just like sumo wrestling. Two umpires from Samurai class are always in the ring and the ring steward to call in the entrants. The umpires are expected to evaluate the two sides of the match very carefully, so that one is a seasoned veteran and another is a rookie, they must stop the fight before any serious injury incurs to one. Their responsibility is to make sure two contending dogs are safe.....no life threatening situation takes place.....also if the owners of dogs are over-excited and disobey what the umpires decides, they will be expelled from the site. When the umpire rings the bell of stopping the fight, unconditional obedience is expected. The rule of fair sports have always been kept and also no gambling were allowed. Just the pride of ownership of superior and stronger dogs traditional to the dogs town Odate was to be pursued. It was surprisingly peaceful in that respect, and was very much different from the blood-sports like bull-fight or cock-fights in the other areas.

The club was mainly governed by the code of traditional Samurai, where the monetary gain was despised. Breeding superior quality animals was always costly venture, and nobody in the club had any ambition of profit. Everybody was willing to sacrifice their time, money, and energy in order to exhibit the proud specimen of their breeding plan. Akitas thus produced have very well been cared for and the members enjoyed congenial atmosphere in participating the club events.

Just when the activities were run so smoothly, the first president of En-Yu-Kai, Mr. Naoto Takahisahas sadly and suddenly passed away. His funeral procession was followed by his beloved Akita and many other Akitas were also following in the parade to his burial at Isshin-in Temple. This funeral scene is still fresh in my memory and was a unique event that took place in Odate - dog's town.

The second president Mr. U. Miyazaki did not stay too long, and the third president, Mr. J. Izumi had to stay for a long time until the time of abolition of En-Yu-Kai activities. After the prime time of the club in the middle of Meiji era, the disaster struck across the nation that had originated from Bull Fighting in Shikoku, where the gambling has escalated beyond the tolerance of the local authority. Banning the bull-fight in Shikoku had spread to the nation-wide banning of any animal related fighting....and in the 40th yr of Meiji (1907), En-Yu-Kai was prohibited from "dog fighting sports"...

Aomori-pref. (Tsugaru region) was the northernmost pref. in Japan just north of Akita. This is the area, where a well-known Mutsu apple has originated, and many ex-fighter Akitas have been placed to the owners of orchards in the area. After the prohibition of Odate's fighting site, the tradition was continued in smaller

scales in Aomori area...and mass exodus from Akita to Aomori took place around this time. Odate was left with only 5 or 6 well-known Akitas, remnant of faded prosperity.....the town had completely lost its vibrancy for the subsequent 4 - 5 years.

Akita Kennel Club:

Ex-members of the club had only one consolation to share....many times we met at our senior member, Mr. S. Suzuki's home, talked about the dogs in the past....when getting excited with memories....many of us even imitated

how the dogs behaved...walking, running, and jumping with four legs (arms and legs)looking like some mental

cases.....stayed beyond midnight. This home party had started with only 5 people including myself had later expanded to have almost 15 regular guests...mainly the ex-committee members of En-yu-kai.

All of us was in agreement to resume the "sports" in Odate, and the new venture was finally approved under the title of "Inu-Sumo" "Dog Sumo-wrestling"Akita Kennel Club was organized in 1913 and under the similar rules and the same set of umpires, the "sports" was resumed in Odate. Compared to 6 yrs ago, the quality of dogs was generally inferior to the past glory, but the number have almost doubled....many dogs returned from Aomori prefecture. It took another 5 - 6 yrs to restore the overall quality to the level of En-Yu-Kai era, but it was done. All of us felt obligated to work together to restore the quality and respected the opinions of pioneer breeders (which we called as Gospel of elders) whenever planning the breedings.

When the popularity was restored around 1915 - 16, the introduction of Tosa-inu to Odate has started. The names and owners of Tosa-inu in Odate are as follows:

Ichiriki-go	S. Tayama
Ryu-go	S. Tayama, Jr
Yamato-go	K. Kagaya
Kinki-go	K. Hiroi
Chiyo-go	E. Hiraizumi

These were all nationally famous Tosa-inus and they were large magnificent animals to my eyes.

At that time it was annual visits have been made by Tosa-inu from Tokyo in New Years and Bon Festival time in Summer. In the Summer of 1915, Tachi-go from Kobe owned by well-known Sake brewery president, Mr.Kano had arrived. Tachi-go was a massive dog, 31" in heights 150 lbs(?) He did not look like Mastiff nor Great Dane types....big boned, tall, and heavy set healthy looking specimen of Tosa-inu...with unique dark color. The color itself was so unlike in Tosa-inu, and even the owner said that Tochi-go did not have Tosa-inu pedigree. In fact, Tachi-go was the largest Tosa-inu that I have seen in my life...and was a mystery dog to all of us Akita fanciers in Odate.

[Before resuming Mr.Kurimori's memoir, some additional information about Tachi-go in Mr.Okada's Pedigree Book, pages 52 & 53 with two pictures (front & side view) is introduced. Tachi (=sword) is described as one of the two ancestors that had the greatest impact to Dewa-line, represented by Kongo-go. Tachi-go and Mutsu-go are both in Kongo pedigree and the background of these two dogs are still unclear. Dewa-go, born Feb.1, '41, reg'd Nippo#1529 has Nippo reg's sire, Akidate-go sired by Tachi-go. Dewa-go is the grandson of Tachi-go on sire's side. Dam of Dewa-go, Tama-go (or Gyoku-go) is said to be sired by Mutsu-go. Dewa-go, the foundation of Dewa-line has, Akidate-go and Mutsu-go as his grandsires, and the pedigrees of both of these dogs are highly debatable. Nippo registration of Dewa-go was later transferred to Akiho as is.....and the mystery of his background has not been questioned during the transitional period of registry. Mr.Okada states "Clarification of Tachi-go's background is the key to explaining the make-ups of Dewa-go. Tachi-go is said to have Iwa-go (Niigata-prefecture) as sire and Hatsu-go (Tokyo) dam. Both Tachi-go and Mutsu-go lived in Osake, and Tachi-go had temporarily resided in Odate once. Mr. R. Hiraizumi's description of Tachi-go=The massive dog of impressive statue, the pigment of coat is rusty brown with chocolate colored face, large head with light eyes, complete lack of texture of Soboku & Shibumi indispensable to Japanese dogs. The sources confirmed by those close to the breeder of Dewa-go's dam is that Tachi-go's influence to Dewa-go and Dewa-line is undeniable.

That there is only 2 months between the date of birth of Dewa-go and his sire Akidate-go and also there seems to be 4 "different" Akidate-go with different date of birth/owners/breeders make it so puzzling to Mr.Okada, the author of the Akita Pedigree book. However, this is pre-Akiho period, and like any other background of purebred dogs, it is not uncommon that there is an unexplainable past.

Bea Pitts in UK was talking about Akitas with more than one name, which I thought was just the way of phoneticization of the scripts....however, Bea is right in this case, and that is the reason why I thought to introduce this issue of Tachi-go. In that sense, this translation is my own learning experience more than anything else!!! Now I know how much I didn't know!!!!]

Introduction of Tosa blood-line:

There are many speculation of the reason why Tosa blood-line had been introduced into Akitas.

Tosa fanciers may be attracted by "strong, unvocal, fearless" elements of the breed. However, for the majority of Akita fanciers at that time, the fighting method of Tosa-inu was tactless and boring .

The idea was however started when a Tosa enthusiast in Hamamatsu-city in Shizuoka-pref., Mr.Suzaki frequently visited Odate in his business trips (clothing industry), observed intensely the "dog sumo" events whenever he was in Odate. Mr.K. Hiroi (Kakui?), his business partner, was then entrusted to keep Mr. Suzuki's Tosa-inu. Every time he travels to Odate from Hamamatsu, a new Tosainu was brought and the previous one was returned.....this had lasted for 6 months to 1 year. The purpose of Mr.Suzaki doing this was later found out that he wanted to transplant the exciting and versatile fighting technique of Akitas into Tosa. Mr.Suzaki was attracted by Akita's feral instinctive fighting method of grabbing the opponents, shaking them to immobilize, whereas the "purebred" Tosa-inu only attacked the ears of opponents.....By exposing Tosa-inu to Akitas in Odate, Mr.Suzaki had successfully accomplished his purpose, and with a superior intelligence gifted to Tosa-inu, they have adjusted their fighting technique to match to that of Akitas. However, at this time, nobody was thinking about creating Tosa-Akita cross.

[The cross-breeding will come into the picture in the next phase, Tobiyama era in 1920s and the next two pages describes that phase of Akita-history up to the formation of Akiho and the designation of Akita, the national treasure. The "dark ages"prior to the formation of Akiho will finish.....The time-frame of this section coincide the pages 39 -41 of JKC Akita Book. Page 39 explains the background toward the designation of Akitas in 1931 as the Natural Monument of Japan.]

Tobiyama era: Tobi-yama is a small hill at the Westside of Odate city. The view from this hill towards the north beyond the stretch of rice fields is Odate Train Station: the train station of Ou-line, Hanawa-line, and Yonashiro-zawa line. The hill was a small park setting and was a popular site for cherry blossom season. This hill is now a newly developed residential area.

Since the early 1920s, the Akita ownership among wealthy entrepreneurs of Geisha quarters became a fashion. The Geisha Quarters were centered in Shintomi-cho, and the area was closer to Tobi-yama than the site in the south of the city. Traffic attracted by the "dog sumo" is normally over 1,000 and for the New Years and Bon Festival time, it would double or triple that number. The road to Tobiyama is the main shopping area of downtown Odate, that nobody can avoid taking to go to the site. A major political lobbying has been started, and although it was a very controversial issue. Unfortunately, I was away from Odate when this issue was so heated up and when I returned the relocation to Tobiyama was already in its place. When I revisited the new site, what I saw was more numbers of cross-breeds fighters..... The strongest and undefeatable dog by the name of Denki-toh (Electric Light) was definitely one of the Tosa-Akita cross. The popularity of this "Electric Light" had prompted the ignorant majority to be drawn into crossing for possibly hybrid vigor.....I have lamented this complete chaos and degeneration of the quality by those who have no knowledge of genetics and pedigree studies. Hybrid vigor often does not last beyond the first generation and continuing cross-breedings only produced inferior specimens even in the area of basic fighting spirits. For those who chose to crossbreed, the only purpose was for the winning, and it was not possible from their random breeding practices. The real fanciers have selectively bred the best to the best either of Akitas or Tosas amongst themselves.

After the official banning of dog fight in Odate, there was an incidence of two top ranking Akitas getting into fight under the broad day light on one Summer day. It lasted longer than 20 minutes, and both dogs do not back off and stare at each other, take a break for drinking water from the river dam, and resume fighting!!! We knew who owns those Akitas, and wanted to stop when it was getting too long close to half-an-hour!!! Both dogs were too excited to even go closer and we have timidly decided to run away from the area....before the owners find us there and blame us??? Although I still felt bad about not stopping this fight and escaped, spectating the real spirited fight between two Akitas was a real refresher to our eyes, when the dog sumo was taken over by all the miserable crossbreds. The number of real Akita type dogs was dwindling every day and this dark ages lasted to the time when Akiho was founded in 1927 and subsequently designated as the National Monument. Those two epoch making events were meant to restore what was lost during the preceding time. The designation was not made to praise what is there, but to prompt immediate action to restore what is sadly lost before it goes completely extinct.

The chaotic period in the beginning of Showa (1926 -) aroused a serious concern about the preservation of Akita-inu amongst the fanciers. Akita was on the verge of distinction.

The late Mr. Shigeie Izumi , a high school teacher in Odate, was the one who owned quality Akitas and the regular attendants of dog sumo with another school teacher, Mr. U. Takahashi, who became a mayor of Odate city later.

Above two personalities, Mr. Eizo Ito, and Heikichi Inaba all got together and made the effort of collecting good quality Akitas.

Mr. Izumi at that time, I think, was the mayor of Odate, and was appointed as the first president of Akiho. Mr. Eikichi Hiraizumi was appointed as VP. The first task of Akiho immediately after its foundation was to locate nation-wide any Akitas that still retains the original type.

The examples of Akitas located at that time was Habutaro-go, the offspring of Tochi-ni-go in Himeji-city. Kin-go was another one to be added here.

The effort for preservation thus made has been rewarded as the designation of Natural Treasure in 1931. Dr. Kaburagi's study and the report on the subject was another major contributing factor.

It was the greatest loss after the accomplishment that Mr. Izumi passed away in 1937. Mr. Hiraizumi had succeeded the position and became the 2nd president of Akiho. Shortly after this time, the first Akiho show was held as a joint venture with Nippo (Nihon-ken Hozon-kai). The Akitas registered by Nippo far excelled that of Akiho in terms of their quality and number at that time. This was the prime time of Nippo, and one of it's stronghold was in Osaka-city. Nippo Osaka branch at that time was led by Dr. Miyake, who was the medical doctor, and owned a large black male and red-sesame female. This was around 1935-36, when we had Nippo show in Ten-noh-ji park in Osaka. The number of Akita entry at that time was 3 from Osaka and 2 from Tokyo. I went to the show mainly in order to see Kongo-go that was sold to Mr. Yamagushi at the astronomical price of 2,000 yen (value of yen at that time will be checked later). My impression of Kongo-go was Red-sesame with an acceptable structure, good ear-set with proper texture, however, there was a lot to be desired as an ideal large size Japanese dog, lacking the heights. However, his popularity was undeniable at that time.

As an extra anecdote at that time, I have visited Dr. Miyake, the head of Nippo Osaka branch, and when I met his black Akita and made a few comments on this dog to his wife and kennel help. I had a telephone call immediately after I came home asking me to come back again to talk Akitas with Dr. Miyake. What it was that Dr. Miyake was so impressed on my comments, and wanted to speak to me more about Akitas.....even when he was called for home visits of his patients, and his nurse was reminding him that he had to go now...he did not want to leave.....and I had to politely run away before he gets into trouble of neglecting his patient. Dr. Miyake was another dog crazies like many other friends I had then.

Akiho had started to be independent from Nippo eventually, and finally could organize a stand-alone show around 1939. It was a hard struggle for our members to accomplish this independence, and we could organize the show in both Tokyo and Osaka in 1940, and Akiho Osaka branch was founded around that time. In our 7th Akiho Osaka regional show, there was even 7 - 8 entries as far as from Akita-pref. There was a show when the famous Matsumine-go was invited as demonstration dog from Kobe. Senri-yama park was the selected show site at that time and the participants from Akita-prefecture included the judges=Mr.Eikichi Hiraizumi, Mr.Sadakichi Tayama. As exhibitors, Mr. Yosaburo Ito, Takichi Takahashi, Kyuzo Inaba, Mr. Tadaharu Kikuchi, and a few others. We had one annual show and a few other matches (Kansho-kai?).

The last pre-war Akiho HQ show, the 9th Akiho show was held in the Spring of 1943 in Odate. 5 - 6 Akitas including my own Toyo-go was exhibited from Osaka and the show site was Tobiyama park, the historical site of "dog sumo" in pre-Akiho era. The total number of entry at that time was approximately 60.

Two judges in this show was Mr. Adachi and Mr. Koshimae and 5 winners were selected among the total entries ...there was no division between male and female classes. Two judges called the exhibitors one at a time in front of their desk (they were sitting on the chair) , and made notes. The winners in this show was 1st place=Toyo-go (Orient), 2nd place=Manshu-go (Manchuria), 3rd place=Denryoku-go(Electric power), all of which were males, and two other winners were females.

Post-War Revivals:

A few years after the end of the war, when the people have regained the stability in their daily life, I have talked to Mr. Hiraizumi to see if any Akitas are still alive.....

Mr.Hiraizumi said..."Let's spread the words to see.."We have also involved Mr. Adachi and Mr.Tayama and all 4 of us were really excited about the idea, and there was a unanimous consensus!

It was 4 years after the beginning of war when the whole thing went to standstill...and was in February of 1947. We had our first post-war exhibition in front of the present day Odate city hall. On the snow filled site, our Exhibition show has attracted 22 Akitas. This was better than expected.

Well-known names were Daigo-Terunishiki-go and Taishu-go (males) and Tate-mitsu-go and a few other females.

In the fall of the same year the 2nd exhibition show was held at Jonan-public school yard, and the entry has doubled to be 42 or 43 Akitas. Wherever they come from, besides the ones exhibited in the Spring show, many more quality Akitas showed up.....such as Tsubaki-goma-go (Ichinoseki), Shin-tora-go. Goromaru and his litter mate Jiromaru were still puppies but looked really promising in this show. In the next year, 1948, we had the 12th shows at Jonan School yard. Show chairman=Mr.Eikichi Hiraizumi, Judges=Mr.S. Matsuyama(Chief of government agriculture Dept) Mr. Adachi, Mr. Tayama, and myself (Kurimori). We had 67 or 8 entries. There was 5 awards from the mixed class of male and females. First place=Shintora-go(M), Second place=Odate-go, Third place=Tsuzuriko-go(?) Female...two other winners are not known. We have decided to have two shows annually...May 3rd for Spring, and Nov.3 for Autumn. The popularity of Akita-inu across the nation was growing and the breeding of good Akitas became the task of all the fanciers. We have imported two or three Akitas from Hokkaido and it had aroused an unnecessary controversy among the fanciers in Odate.

The rumors were flying around that Hokkaido Akitas are the cross-bred of Karafuto dog, but I must defend the Akitas from Hokkaido by explaining their background properly. As I mentioned earlier, there was a time when fighting was popular and many Akitas have been purchased by the people in Hakodate area (closest to Honshu) in Hokkaido. I was once invited with my Ohkido-go to visit Hakodate. From Hakodate, Akitas were also spreading to interior of Hokkaido, Hidaka mountain area as well. As I had an annual business trip to Hokkaido between 1937 - 1944, and I have definitely sited a few Akitas in Hakodate area then. With the restoration after the 2nd world war, Mr. Ito brought back Akitas from Hokkaido in 1947/8 and it is not fair for him to suspect that he brought Karafuto-cross.

There was a dark ages lasted between the end of Taisho-era and the beginning of Showa, and it took almost 40 years to restore the image to date. The endless trial and error period- that is, sometimes all of the sudden type and heights improve, and then it slows down ...it was like two steps forward and one step backward....

With my own analysis,I can divide the period of improvement into 3 phases:

- (1) Initial stage of Akiho - 1930 - 1943
- (2) 1947 - 1956
- (3) 1956 - present

Remnant of Akitas in earlier Phase (2) period was so limited, to small a number to accommodate rapidly expanding population of Akita fanciers. In-breeding was an unavoidable method taken at that time. When the population of Akitas increased, we could finally avoid relying on inbreedings. Until about 1965, there was a number of quality Akitas, and yet in the next 5 - 6 years, it was somewhat taking the downhill in terms of type and quality. We were facing magnanimous task of restoring Akita types at this time.

The repetition of improvement and degeneration experience by the Akita fanciers in the course of history is just like a futile effort of piling up the stones only crushed later....

We owe to our ancestors back to a few thousand years in Odate for what we have now. It is just like a sword handed down generation by generation as a family treasure and we are not allowed to have this treasure rusted...when it is by our mistake, it is our obligation to restore the original shine when it is returned to its proper sheathe.

The evaluation criteria by the Pioneers:

It has been over 30 years already since the foundation of Akiho. This was the period of long and enduring past as I mentioned earlier in my series. After the war as I was sent from Akiho to its branches across the country, I can see the sign of improvement of overall quality.... some of them can be called as ideal specimens of the breed. With the nationwide effort of restoration of Akita type, and with the trend that I could observe first hand, I have no doubt that the day will soon come when the uniformity of the Akita type be accomplished.

I would like to mention about so-called "old type and new type". Comparing the past to the present is always the subject of discussion throughout the history and will also be the subject for the days to come. I would like to make a point that when making this comparison, you have to know the definition of "old type"without having the knowledge of the things to compare to, all the discussions will become invalid! Akita-inu since the ancient time was considered to be Hunting dog...and until recently, in the village of Ani-ai, the large dogs have been used mainly for hunting bears.

I have personally experienced the difference of hunting dogs and fighting dogs when I purchased a large black sesame male from this village in the 1920s. Attracted by what his hunter-owner told me about this dog I paid a large sum for this dog "brave and fearless when confronting large wild bears and boars.....fighting against dogs should be nothing to him...a very easy win!" Although it made sense to me what this hunter said, the fact was that it did not work that way??

The hunting dogs are expected to assist the hunter to corner the animals without fighting, so that the hunter can kill. The most important thing is to keep the animals from escaping.....not to challenge and win. A superior hunter was not a superior fighter.....they had to be raised and trained to serve for each different purpose. However, one thing in common for both of those dogs is the importance of their sound basic body structures. The critical area is the head and muzzle. They have to also have strong and assertive temperament not to back down from any situation.

When I have stopped over at Odate on the way home from Hokkaido in 1940, I have visited Mr.Hiraizumi and two other executive members of Akiho was also there. According to one of them whose name I don't mention said "The fanciers in the past did not care how Akitas looked like, all they wanted was the strong fighting dogs".... I asked him "For what period are you talking about?" His answer was not too specific..just said "I mean long time ago". I agree there was a time when what he said was the case..which was Tobiyama era...when the concern was real that the Akita type was almost non-existent among the fighting dogs. However, aside to that particular limited time-frame, "fighting" was secondary to the "spirit and structure" desirable for Akita-inu. The fighting in fact provided the opportunity to prove those essences for ideal Akitas. We wanted them to be strong and fearless, and yet, those are the additional criteria only for those who possess the basic type and quality of Akita-inu. To me, the executive of Akiho I met was not knowledgeable enough of the real Akitas throughout the historical development prior to 1920s, and I must clarify some of the mistaken concept regarding "old" type of Akita-inu.

It was true that we were aiming to produce strong dogs, and yet prior to Tobiyama era, all the basic desirable quality and type intrinsic to Akita-inu was the pre-requisites that superceded any other elements to be brought in.

Aside from the rules, regulations, or standards set forth by Akiho, I have offered the executives to explain how the pioneers viewed on evaluating Akita-inu. Mr.Ryunosuke Hiraizumi was asked to make a note of my narratives, and compare them to the Akiho standard as a reference. The general consensus was that what pioneers were looking at is more thorough than what is written in the Akiho standard. Basically, I have stated the following in terms of desirable structure for the stronger Akitas:

- * Those lacking the strength in hind legs can fell easily while in fight, cannot sustain the position.
- * Hindquarters have to be sturdy enough for endurance
- * Frontquarter and front legs, where more than half of body weights falls must be extra strong
- * Lack of depth in chest would cause shortness of breath more quickly
- * Those with proper tuckup has more flexibility and can manipulate skillfully when facing against larger opponents....they don't fell too easily in the ring.
- * Those with thick and well set tails are considered to be stronger.
- * Tight and thick padded foot help endurance in defending the position

The desirable conditions listed above are somewhat similar to that of body structure of Sumo wrestlers, but those are not just for the purpose of fighting but are desirable structures for all healthy Akita-inu.

Facial expression and the shape of head are the vital areas for evaluating the spiritual strength.

It has to be noted that Akita fanciers in 1940 was not aware of the existence of "guard hairs" due to the fact that the texture of coat at that time was so deviated and majority of "Akita-inu" was devoid of guard hairs! It is only recently that we started seeing Akita-inu with proper coat textures.

Through my own personal observation, I believe that 70% of Akita-inu that satisfy the above noted conditions are equipped with proper and spirited fighting instinct. Needless to say that the genetics and environmental factors do influence conformation and temperament as well.

[The following 6 pages are devoted for detailed description of body parts of Akita-inu. 14 sections from Head to Tail in 6 pages basically parallels to the descriptions in Pages 90-99 of JKC Akita Book, and some vocabularies have to be burrowed to keep consistency in the choice of words. I have decided to leave #12 (long and detailed descriptions of the parts of Akita-inu) to the end, because the basic description is available in JKC Book. More accuracy is required for the 6 pages I skip now to supplement the description in JKC Book, and I have to have more patience to translate this section. Now I can go ahead and start an exciting debut of Goromaru-go in the Spring of 1948.]

Legacy of Goromaru-go:

Both Goromaru and Jiromaru are sired by Tsubaki-goma-go, and yet they have been so different and did not look like littermates from the very beginning. Jiromaru was no way inferior than the average Akitas at that time, but just Goromaru had exceptional substance and bone.

Every body had lamented the fact that Goromaru was a pinto at that time, but to me the discrimination against pinto did not make sense at all. I was the firm believer of "pinto" had its place in the history of Japanese dogs, and to prove its existence in the history should be one of the tasks towards the future of Akita-inu.

The debut of Goromaru to Akiho show was a Heaven-sent opportunity for me to present my idea of pinto color in Akita-inu.

In the Spring Akiho show in 1948, when Goromaru made his debut, the panel of 4 judges was headed by Mr. Shigeo Matsuda, the section chief of Prefectural Agriculture Ministry. The other three judges were Mr. Tayama, Mr. Adachi, and myself. The total number of entry was over 60 Akitas. I was the judge for the class that Goromaru was entered in. The overall appearance of Goromaru far exceeded that of any other Akitas in the class. I had given him 90% to perfection to Akita standard and expected Goromaru to be the best overall unfortunately, when the final consensus was made, my wish was defeated by 3:1 and 3 other judges insisted that no pinto should be awarded in Akiho show!

Although nothing could be done at that time, I made up my mind to take this issue very strongly to the next board meeting, which I did soon after this show. In this board meeting, to my greatest disgust, the subject of pinto color was considered to be "out of question". Justification of the board members at that time was "since after the designation for Natural Monument by the Ministry preserving the cultural heritage, no pinto colored Akita should receive any awards in Akiho show" In their opinion, not only pinto should never be shown, but they should be culled to start with!!

I have questioned the reason why and was provided the answer by Mr. Hiraizumi that it was the original recommendation by Dr. Kaburagi at the time of designation. Luckily, one board member questioned the relationship between pinto color and the history of Akita-inu, that provided the opportunity to express my interpretation of pinto color in the breed.

The ancestors of Northern breeds including Akita-inu was pinto and it is perfectly normal that this bloodline is carried over in Akita-inu. Pinto color should be treasured to be utilized in full in the process of restoration of Akita-type.

It was unfortunately true that Akiho Standard did disqualify pinto from placement, and yet if that standard is proven to be detrimental to the process of restoration and preservation of true Akita-inu it should be amended to that effect.

At 1948 Fall Akiho show, Goromaru was not in a good condition to be entered and Mr. Funakoshi, the owner of Goromaru promised me to condition him for the Spring Akiho show in 1949. Mr. Funakoshi told me that he did not care to even preparing for the show after he heard that pinto Akita has no chance to place....however, he told me that "since you are so supportive for Goromaru, I will do my best to make Goromaru look best for the next Spring show"....

Mr. Funakoshi's determination was proven in the Spring Akiho show in 1949, and Goromaru looked fantastic and breathtakingly impressive!

I have also made up my mind that if Akiho's rule and regulation is as inflexible as it was the year before and dump good Akitas just because of its colors....I had no hesitation of having nothing to do with Akiho....I told my close friends that I would no longer have any faith with Akiho and quit all together from any Akiho related activities.

The day before the show, I was summoned by the president, Mr. Hiraizumi, who questioned me if "it was true that you would quit from Akiho if Goromaru does not place?" I said that was very true! I took this opportunity to brain-wash Mr. Hiraizumi of his mistaken concept of pinto Akitas until he looked fed up and asked me to stop.

We were blessed with a wonderful Spring day with cherry blossom in its full bloom...it was an ideal site for Akiho show.... The award system changed since 1948 has allowed 8 winners out of the total entries, the minimum age was 6 month old. The panel of judges was the same as the previous year. I have asked three other judges before the final placement was announced if they would agree to include Goromaru among 8 winners. This had prompted these three judges to have a private meeting to answer. Then they came back to me and asked "what placement do you want for Goromaru?" I told them that I was aware very well of the biased views against pinto color, and I don't expect Goromaru to be the top winner. Yet, I don't accept anything under the 6th place for him. Three other "colleagues" of mine had agreed and Goromaru-go was successfully awarded the Sixth placement in this show. No protest was heard among the spectators and the show ended successfully in peace.

Breeding of Goromaru-go ex. Tatemitsu-go:

Akiho show of Spring, 1949, has ended without any commotion, and yet my suicidal insistence of placing a pinto Akita had definitely aroused controversy among Akiho members. However all the bad mouthing and gossiping was expected and I had a way to take any opportunity to explain why I believed in the way I did....

In July, 1949, Tatemitsu-go owned by Mr. Hiraizumi came into heat. Although I tried to recommend Goromaru as a stud dog for her, Mr. Hiraizumi asked me to take her to Futatsui-village to be bred to Tsubaki-goma-go (Goromaru's sire). I have reluctantly transported Tatemitsu-go to be bred to Tsubaki-goma-go owned by Mr. Ichinoseki. However, Tsubakigoma-go was not in the condition possibly due to the hormonal deficiency and the breeding has failed and I came back to Mr. Hiraizumi's again. There was 7 - 8 executive members of Akiho waiting for my return and I have reported the failure of the breeding. At the same time, I have again strongly suggested to use Goromaru. The concern expressed by Mr. Hiraizumi at that time was how many of offspring will be pinto....My answer was that since Tatemitsu-go was already 4 yrs and had already had a few litters to date, the litter size should not be more than 4 - 5 puppies, and should consist of 2 pinto and 2 - 3 solid colors. Mr. Tayama agreed and everybody else seconded. I have immediately

phoned the owner of Goromaru, Mr. Funakoshi in Akita-city and traveled there with Tatemitsu-go the next day. When the litter was on the ground on Sept. 10th, my prediction was right on the spot. 3 solid black, one pinto male and one pinto female. One pinto female was exceptionally big. Mr. Hiraizumi kept one male and one female later when the puppies were 60 days old, he sent the female to his relative in the isolated village....due to the fear of distemper in the city area. Unfortunately, this promising female fell into the pond and diedOne black male was placed to Mr. Namioka of Kakedo village at 5 - 6 month. [This was Tate-no-ryu-go, and his picture is seen in Page 51 of JKC book.]

The breeding of Goromaru to Tatemitsu-go had influenced the owners of other females in the southern Akita area and Goromaru was used extensively in that area. Many superior quality offspring was the proof of Goromaru's potential as an ideal stud, and the owners of females in Odate followed the trend later.

Thus, the breeding of Goromaru and Tatemitsu initiated the pattern and contributed tremendously to the improvement of Akita-inu from that time on.

Going back to the idea of breeding Tatemitsu and Tsubakigoma as Mr. Hiraizumi originally tried, just the age alone of this pair was totally inappropriate as far as I am concerned. It is not advisable to breed older male to older female. Although it may not be scientifically proven, it was our unwritten practice to use a younger stud for the females older than 4 yrs. The timing of breeding is said to be 14 - 15 days after the beginning of heat, and yet, some females are very clean and counting the number of days after the sign of heat become visible may not be appropriate.

Performance and Trainability:

All dogs should be gifted with inner spiritual dignity specific for the breed. Although the focus has been shifted to appreciate the beauty of show dogs, if it is only skin deep and not supported by the hidden quality of mental alertness and aptitude for performance, they do not deserve any admiration from us true fanciers.

Suggestion was made to find the way to do performance test for Akita, but unlike the breeds like German Shepherd Dogs that has a long proven history of trainability, the potential of Akitas is still unknown and requires more research and preparation to set up the method of performance test.

Although nobody that I know of in Akita-prefecture is trying to train Akita in performance events, there are few cases where a successful demonstration was done in other cities by enthusiastic trainers. In the second and third regional Akiho show in Osaka, a pair of Akita owned by Mr. Maeda was demonstrated in successfully go through a ring of fire seen in the circus animals. These two Akitas could perform 4 - 5 other exercises perfectly well on commands. There was a similar demonstration exhibited in Hiroshima show, too.

During the second world war, many Akitas have been drafted by the army to be trained for war duties with German Shepherd Dogs...and the trainers' observation was that Akitas were as good, and yet they were quite different each other. The weakness of Akitas was that their home-coming instinct and attachment to the original handler made it more difficult to adjust to the new locations and new handlers whenever the army moves.....Akitas tended to try to return to the previous location and try to find the previous handlers...which is the proof of their loyalty, and yet was the weakness in the war situation.

Another drawback was while G.S.D. is born to be observant to the verbal or physical commands of the handlers and naturally obey the voice and action of the handlers, Akitas tended to be confused of what is expected of them.....reactions become unstable and insecure.

The essence of Akita is in its dignity...the alertness and confidence unmoved by any other surrounding situations...they should be undisturbed by external commands....their ears always have to be set in its positions..... trying to obey commands of handlers disrupt the alertness and affects negatively to their unique functional beauty.....which is sometimes compared to the statue of ancient warriors.....

The history of training police dogs started in Germany in 1886, only approx. 80 yrs ago. The dogs are known to get wiser as they get older and naturally get used to human languages. The difference between Akita-inu and the other western breeds is that Akita is gifted by instinctive aptitude for performance, whereas the other breeds do acquire the techniques through training.

Akita can prove their ability without any formal trainings ...the episode of the Akita called "Aka"(red) owned by an old woman vender visiting Ezuri village daily with Aka to sell fresh vegetables to the villagers. Aka was always on guard for his old mistress and whenever there is an argument on the business and Aka senses the danger, he instantly and violently reacts for protection. And yet, if he is challenged by other dogs, he ignores the challenges until he is told by his mistress to go ahead and fight....the command of this old woman to Aka is "if you don't win, you don't get fed today!"...when she wants the fight to stop, all she has to tell Aka is "leave it!". For those who asked this woman how she trained Aka, her answer was "all you need is to love your dog, the rest will follow"...

As to the disciplines for disobedience, even when you feel like hitting the dog, you should never ever repeat it more than

once....Akita will usually fight than flight if they think the discipline is unreasonable..and it does not accomplish anything....after just a single and strong disciplinary command leave the dog for a while ignoring him....even for an hour or two.....let the dog think what he did wrong.....when you return, be gentle and calmly explain what he did wrong while petting him. I was very successful this way to have trusting relations with my own Akitas.

Each one of us, humans, has a unique personality and so has the dogs.

A well-known philosopher, animal lover, in Tokugawa era said "loyalty of dogs is life-long" and "if we can no longer have faith in human world, we take refuge to the world of animals, for there you will never be betrayed..especially in the world of canines..."

When I lived in Osaka, I was invited by the president of Japanese branch of an American bank in Ashiya. He had 8 Akitas and one Western breed of dogs in his gorgeous mansion. This foreigner loved the dogs since his childhood, and said that he had many different breeds of dogs in his life. He had extensive knowledge of dogs that I was impressed with...and I have asked him of his opinion about Akita-inu. He said that "I have never had any other breeds as intelligent as Akitas, and together with the large and magnificent statue, I have no doubt that this is the breed that the country of origin can be proud of in the world of dogs." He has also itemized the points as:

*Akita is the perfect representation of Japan ...its land and people

*faithful and loyal to the owners

*know the hierarchy of the family members and behaves accordingly. Although I am only at home for the weekends and evenings ... dogs obey my commands instantly even when they disobey that of the other members of family or servants.

*much easier for house-breaking than any other western breeds and extremely clean...

*out of 8 Akitas I have, 5 are raised here as puppies and 3 others were given to me from other friends. At around 60 days old, the puppies learn where to do their business, and this is only after they are taught 5 - 6 timesthis is something that I have never experienced with other breeds..

Talking about the intelligence of dogs...there was a very interesting article in the Readers Digest about a woman who came to the classified advertisement section of the New York Times. She came with her dog and ordered an ads for sale of her dog. She phoned in 5 minutes and cancelled the ads. She said "I just wanted to let my dog know that I don't want to keep him any longer if he does not behave...after he listened to what I was going to advertise, his behavior had improved ..." It showed how well the dog understand human language. It is not just Akitas, but any breeds of dogs, and as the dogs get older, their understanding of human language get better.

When we compare the trainability of Akitas to other breeds of dogs, for example, German Shepherd dogs for their search and rescue ability, they have an aptitude and trained....however compared to the total population of GSD, the ones that are actually trained and used for that purpose are only limited number. If the Akitas are trained properly, I am positive that they will match to GSD or even excel.

In Ani-ai village of Akita- prefecture, large dogs have been used for hunting large games and medium dogs for small game and birds. I have once purchased a bear hunting dog from that village.

We all know that dogs are no longer needed for sledding purpose. All together dogs are starting to be looked at only for their companionships, beauty and as type of hobby to own.

However, I can cite a few examples of how well Akita can be when they have a chance to prove themselves.

Mr. Saeki, the board member of Osaka Akiho branch took his female Akita for hunting with his hunter friend with his pointer. The moment they went into the mountain, Akita started following the scent and was much faster than the pointer to flush a large bird. This hunter friend was so excited to see the potential of Akita and asked Mr. Saeki if he could keep her for 6 months to train her for the hunting, but Mr.Saeki had to decline, because he did not want to be separated from his Akita for such a long time.

In the apple orchards in Aomori-prefecture , they have a herd of pigs to get fertilizer for the orchards. The pigs are left at large while their house is cleaned. Akitas as they watch the farmers to herd the pigs after the cleaning is finished go around to collect the pigs that went too far away...in fact, they did learn how to herd without being taught. At the harvest season, once they are trained to go around the orchard after it gets dark, they make security round every an hour or two without fail. When a strange visitor comes and touches a ripe apple on the tree, the dog will nip them very lightly just to remind them. These farm Akitas also helped carting to collect the feeds for pigs as well.

There is also a story of an Akita sent to Mongolia at the request of the emperor of Mongolia around 1936 or 7. The article by Mr. H. Takahisa in a dog fancier's newspaper has this story of "Sheep and Dogs". Tokuoh, the Emperor of Mongolia was working for improving their quality of Sheep and had imported Australian Melino(sp) sheep. He had imported a few hundreds of this very expensive sheep and established a big ranch. He was troubled by the attacks of

feral dogs and wolves, and initially imported GSD from Japan for guarding. However, feral dogs in the area are much larger than the domestic dogs and GSD was no use to them. Then the emperor asked Akitas to be sent to replace GSD. There was an Akita male that was not too large in size but was a very good fighter. This male and a female were sent to Northern China and then it took two weeks to get to Mongolia from there. Upon arrival, this Akita had almost killed a resident GSD, but was not punished for the action because he is owned by the emperor of Mongolia. There was no problem for introducing the Akita to the sheep in the ranch, and Akitas were left in the ranch at large. Their guarding ability for sheep against feral dogs and wolves was superb, and even the size of opponents are bigger than Akitas, all that it took was 5 - 7 minutes to grab them by the throat and shake. Within one month after their introduction in the ranch, 28 feral dog and wolves were killed, and the peace of sheep ranch have completely restored. A big thank you note was received by a person in Japan who had exported these Akitas to Mongolia. In fact, this Akita was owned by a friend of mine, Mr. T. Shoji, and he was so proud to show me a thank you note from the Emperor of Mongolia. Mr. Shoji had returned to his native city, Odate from Osaka in 1957 and passed away 1961.

[*Structural analysis in the next section was incomplete...one page seems to be missing in between this section and the next section.....where how Akitas as companion dogs should be raised and treated.....I will skip structural analysis, that was only two paragraphs.....]

There are many Akita owners who treasure their Akitas, treat them with utmost affection as their family companion. They say they love their Akitas.

Love is in definition "infinite virtue", "something eternal and unchanged" and there should not be any remuneration expected from those you love.

On that assumption, we can look at the way we, humans, love their companion animal including our dogs.

That we had originally dragged wild animals into our human world, tried to have their behavior adjusted to fit into our life style, and called those effort of ours as "improving" and caring the animal life, it is in fact not the love towards animals but is only the calculating effort made by human beings. The process of domestication is based on the desire to exploit and is not the same as uncalculating love for the animals.

There is an undeniable bond between the dogs and owners that is almost a sublime and spiritual, that gives us consolation in our daily life.....in return, we are to provide the best and the most comfortable environment for our canine companions.

When looking back to how and what we have provided to our Akitas.....for preserving and retaining their basic characteristics of stoicism and sturdiness.....the effect of our human intervention is to be analyzed seriously.

Under the human care, dogs are not expected to earn their basic needs....out of three basic necessities of clothing, foods, and living space, they are born with their fur, the other two are secured by the human owners. They do not even have to defend themselves from outside enemies and even breeding and whelping are supported by the owners. It is so natural when this type of protected life is carried over for generations, the alertness gifted in the wildlife will gradually be lost from the species. There are some Akita bitches completely devoid of motherly instinct and did not even know how to nurse her offsprings...to get the owners to bottle feed them...

Some fanciers may argue to return them to the more natural environment, but it does not sound too practical at this age. However, over-protection is to be avoided.

Genetic factors play a major roll in the temperament of Akitas, but the environmental influence and conditioning will modify the behaviors substantially.

Environment in limited sense is the immediate living quarters, but in larger sense, the changing social environment should also be the factors. Environmental contamination in our society in general which is escalating to the political issue.....loud and constant noise caused by highway traffics and high-rise buildings....neon-signs in big cities...all these aspects of civilizations that are even annoying to us, the humans, are affecting more seriously the mental stability of our companion friends. This is the tragedy of the modern mechanism of the society that negatively is challenging all of us, living creatures.

However, the faster the changes in society moves, and the busier our daily lives becomes, the more we feel the need of treasuring our "natural monument" Akita-inu. We take refuge in the proud statue as well as the classic and stoic spiritual representation of what we have lost in the process of modernization of Japanese society.

Home-coming Instinct:

This is the instinct most of birds and mammals are gifted with. Swallows, Nightingales, Skylarks and all other migrating birds go back to its nest.

We often hear that the dogs over 1 yr old tend to escape from the new homes and go back to their original home within

a few weeks after they are placed.

A well-known Akita by the name of Adachi-no-shiro was sold to Aomori-city, and the new owner stopped confining this dog after about a certain period of caution...and it was almost after 1 year since he came that the new owner lost him for 3 days....they initially suspected that there may be some bitch in heat that he was visiting....then after trying to find him everywhere, they had a call from the original owner of his return...the distance between two homes is approx.80 miles, and besides at the boundary of Odate-city, there is 150m wide Yonashiro river. Although there is a route across the hill to take avoiding the river, the dog crossed by the ferry when he came, so he was seen by the villagers swimming to cross the river..... what prompted him to return after over one year is hard to know, but this is the evidence that the dogs have a very long lasting memory. There are many other stories of dogs going home 50 - 100 miles taking 2 - 3 days. My own Akita, Ohkido-go once came home from 50 miles away in 1.5 days....when he was sent, it was by the train.....we suspect if the dogs travel by foot, even a few hundred miles distance can easily be traced back.

The most spectacular incidence was the Akita called "Yonaka-go", (midnight-go)...this Akita was sold to the American Occupational Force's Intelligence Division Head, and he was delivered in the midnight to be named as Yonaka-go.

Yonaka-go was so well taken care of by his American owners, but when they were called back to US, the dog had to wait until the arrangement had to be made to send him to the States by boat. His breeder in Shimizu village was keeping Yonaka while waiting for the next boat. Shimizu village is 2 - 3 km from Ugo-nagano station of Obonai-line. After a few weeks in the breeder's home, Yonaka-go decided to go back to the army camp he used to live. He took a train from Ugo-nagano station to Ohmagari-station, got off to take Northbound train to Aomori. He had ignored Southbound train to Tokyo, while the train came before the Northbound. The station master and the conductors expected his American owner would follow the dog, and yet when the train stopped at Akita Station after 2.5 hours, Yonaka-go jumped out and rushed to the American army base, where he expected to meet with his owners. The officers at the camp were so puzzled to receive Yonaka-go without escort, and immediately contacted the breeder to come and get the dog. He was happily reunited in the States shortly after that with his American owners, and most likely buried in the foreign soil by this time. Home-coming Instinct in Akita is definitely based on their affection and loyalty to be with their beloved owners and their intelligence far exceed that of some of the inferior human counterparts.

The episodes like the above, where the dogs were brought in by the train and could still sense the way to go back is a very interesting subject to speculate.....how can they find the direction ???

In the next section, I would like to analyze the dogs' 5 sense of perceptions, and how they compare to those of humans.

The olfactory and other sensory organs:

The following is based on my personal observation of what makes dogs act the way they do...Which one of the sensory organs (ears,eyes, nose) triggers their action first? It looks to me the ears are the most sensitive one of the three.

According to the research of a scholar (Engelman??), dogs' capacity of hearing is four times of that of humans. While human ears can only catch 20- 20,000 frequency of vibrations per second, dogs' equivalent is 120,000. One experiment of how the dog can decipher the frequency proved to be that they can differentiate the speed of metronome as accurately as between 96 and 100.

Dogs also are equipped with very sharp olfactory organs, and depend on the type of actions to be taken, nose will go hands in hands with ears.....it could be transmitted from ears to nose, then to the brain.

Eyes seem to be secondary to ears and nose and especially under the broad daylight. There are some opinions that dogs may be short-sighted, but I don't quite agree with it .

Zoologist and optomologist state that canine and feline eyes are different. When I tried to experiment the extent of visibility for my Akita...try to approach very quietly from 100m away from the leeward with rubber shoes, it is only after I approach to 50 - 60m when he can visually spot my approach....

Nocturnal animals are expected to be mobile only after the sunset time and sleeping during the day. The pupil seems to be designed not too resistant to the sunlight, but gets sharper in the darkness.

Their superior visions in the darkness are proven when I let my Akita go off lead at night after 10:pm and at that time in the countryside where I lived, we could hardly see anything of 100m away. My Akita was jumping and flying the street, stopping at the corner, waiting for me to direct him which way to turn....sometimes leaping to chase some animals that I cannot see. It is amazing how they can squeeze through any narrow openings so smoothly without getting stuck.

It is obvious that dogs are equipped with superior night visions unique to the nocturnal animals indispensable for survival in the wilderness.

Home-coming-instinct may be explained with the understanding of their superior olfactory and sensory organs.....whatever the way they are inter-related to prompt certain actions.

Still it is a mystery that Akitas carried by trains and other transportations can find the way back on their own when the distance involved is over 100 miles.....

When a new Akita is brought to my home and taken for walk on lead, he starts sniffing something in the air...initially pointing the nose up and go around 4 ways until his nose stops at the direction of his old home. This will usually last the first few weeks and this is the time-frame that he can never be trusted to go off lead. When the dog is brought by the train, I usually avoided to go to near the train station and went to walk to the opposite direction. However, if he ever escapes, the first place he run up to is the train station!

It is assumed that dogs are equipped with memory, but not with reasoning power . What was imprinted by their olfactory, auditory senses into their memory is what appears to be guiding their actions.

Birds and animals are closer to the nature and they seem to have senses of premonition....Extra sense of instinctive perceptions unique to the living creatures...mystical and spiritual in Buddhist realm of thought. Or sensitively reacting to the magnetic power of the great planet, earth. Like the migrating birds, dogs behavior may be assisted by olfactory and sensory organs in conjunction with the dynamics of the great universe.

There are many aspects of animal behaviors unexplainable by our knowledge of biology or philosophy. Birds and animals seem to possess instinctive radar equivalent of our technology has created. Having the clear knowledge and understanding of how Akita-inu lived in the ever changing environmental factors throughout the historical development of their native habitat is very important.

Unfortunately, there are some among the contemporary Akita fanciers who are totally ignorant of what took place prior to the dark ages of "dog fighting era" in 1920s and post war period of 1940s. The confusion of similar nature took place when the designation to Natural Monument was proposed in the mid-Taisho era.

I would like to quote the section of "Nihon-ken no Kenkyu", The Research of Japanese Dogs, published by Mr.Y. Ohura in 1920. "Recently, a few articles regarding the origin of Akita-inu is cited in daily newspaper and research publications. Serious reminder has to be made to those who argues that Akita-inu is the creation of contemporary times. This mistaken idea is caused due to the confusion of the names between Odate-inu and Akita-inu. Yes...the name "Akita-inu" is new, and yet the same dog existed in the history of Tohoku from the ancient times.....which had been called as Tohoku-inu or Odate-inu in the area. The native dogs in Tohoku area are the ancestors of Akita-inu.

Two epoch making publications explain the background of discussion on Akita-inu to be designated as natural monument. One by Dr.Kaburagi and another by Mr.Saito, "Significance of preservation of Japanese Dogs" and "History of Preservation of Japanese dogs" respectively. With the advent of opening the door to foreign cultures following the Meiji restoration, the trend was there the things uniquely Japanese have slowly been fading and eventual extinction became to be a serious concern. The state of Japanese dogs especially large size dogs in Odate was a typical specimen of this degeneration. When Dr. Kaburagi was sent to Odate in 1920 to investigate the eligibility of Akita-inu for designation of the act, it was the worst time of the quality of Akita-inu due to the fore-mentioned cross breedings to produce strong fighting dogs. However, just the fact that Akita-inu was the first candidate for consideration for the natural monument by the scholar like Dr.Kaburagi is the proof that this breed of dogs did exist in the area as Tohoku-Nihon-ken.

The confusion as to the true origin of Akita-inu is still lingering around to this time of 1970s....and the problem is caused to the lack of clarification at the time when the name was changed from Odate-inu to Akita-inu when the designation to Natural Monument was finally accomplished. Outlook toward this newly named breed among the grassroots Akita fanciers even in Odate area was totally inconsistent, and the clear vision was sadly lacking even then. Some were as ignorant as just taking the designation as a blanket recognition of the degenerated quality of Akita-inu at that time.

However, 13 years after the original rejection, the designation was accomplished mainly to encourage the effort of restoration of the real large size Japanese dogs, that was otherwise going to become extinct. The number of dogs still retaining the original Japanese types at the time of designation was so limited and yet 40 years since that time, we are now blessed with the quantity and quality of Akita-inu successfully restored. The long and enduring past had finally found its way to brilliant future.

Looking back to the post-war restoration period, one valuable source toward the restoration was the bloodline of native Japanese dogs or "Ji-ken". The main Ichinoseki-line was blended with the side lines in the Southern Akita region called Taihei-line and Nikkei line to restore the purity of the blood previously contaminated by the cross breeding in the fighting era. The intent of this effort was to restore what had been in existence in the past more than 3 to 400 years in the area of Odate throughout its historical development, and sadly disrupted due to the influx of non-Japanese elements in the most recent past.

The restoration in the post-war period in the past 20 years is rather too hasty in a way but we have followed the same vision of what had been done after the designation to the Natural Monument in 1920. There are opinions that too much human intervention had been made in the process of restoration, and yet for any species to be saved from extinction and to preserve and stabilize the desirable type, it was the necessary "evil" that had to be followed. In the same way

that Akita-inu was totally facing its extinction by human intervention of trying to create the strong fighting dogs, the same method had been taken to restore the original types by the real fanciers of the breed.

Regardless what had taken place in the process in the past, I have no doubt that Akita-inu as I can see now possesses undeniably original bloodline passed over since the ancient times.....

In order to understand the real value of Akita-inu in the contemporary world, it is the must to know the real history of the breed in its native land....it's origin and the long enduring history of the breed.

Diet:

About the Bone: Bone is one of the indispensable foods for dogs. I hear some people are crushing the bones of beef or horse, but this is a big mistake and does more harm than good. Bones are to be chewed and not to be eaten. The main purpose of giving the bones is to help digestion after the meal. Have your Akita to chew the bone for about half an hour after the meal. The type of bone recommended is the one that has knuckles on both ends. Chewing the hard bone induces the saliva to help digestion. At the same time, it helps strengthen the upper and lower jaws to improve the bite. This is more important for the puppies and they should be given bones like their toys.

Soft beef or horse bones are good for feeding, but the crushed bones are dangerous. Most dogs tend to swallow them without chewing, which causes the scar in the digestive tracks. Even fish bones of fair size, they tend only chew once or twice and swallow them quickly.

Shark Fins: We used to feed shark fin or raw or dried shark spine. It was much softer and better than the bones of animals. I found these soft bones of sharks helped appetite and elimination, and as a result, helped puppies to grow faster and healthier.

Although I tried this comparative experiment of feeding for 5 - 6 puppies and 2 - 3 young dogs for the duration of approx. 2 years, I could confirm the advantage of giving shark bones and fins. I also tried to feed shark bones prior to and after the meals to find out the different reactions, and when the dogs eat them before the meals, they eat less meal. However, the dogs really love sharks and condition improves tremendously. If this effect be studied by dieticians, perhaps the nutritional value can be analyzed, but I am positive it is an excellent source of protein.

Between 1936 - 1944, I was in a whole sale business for the Chinese restaurants located in Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe area, and shark fin was one of the main supplies for the Chinese foods. It was also considered to have some pharmaceutical value and was only served at more exclusive Chinese restaurants than average.

When I lived in Odate, obtaining shark bones or the whole fish was easier there, but while I was in Osaka, the only food supplies from shark was fins. I tried to collect the fibers of fins to feed to the dogs and had the same good result as giving the bones.

During the war, no luxurious foods like shark fins was available. However, we are back again to the time of peace with plenty of foods to choose from. I still recommend any types of bones and strongly warn not to crush it before giving them. There was two cases of Akitas that the veterinarians called me for advise...one well-known Akita in Hiroshima lost appetite and had blood in stool...sure enough the owner confessed to have given him crushed bones. The another case in Osake was also in a very serious condition and the owner apparently fed two complete duck bones....there was a few other cases that the ignorance of the owners caused the problems like this.

Fish bones: There are some puppies that eat sand and clay. Although parasite is one of the suspected cause of this, it sometimes is the sign of calcium deficiency. Calcium Phosphate is one of the requirements for growing puppies and it can be supplemented by burnt fish bones. It will sure stop them from eating sand and clay, and for 60 days old puppies, you can even feed a full fish of horse mackerel.

When the puppies are having a loose stool, feeding grilled fish bones help stabilizing the quality of stools. For puppies over 4 months old, they can have any big fish bones without any hazards. Their digestive system is quite different from ours, and even when they eat bones, I have never seen them coming out in pieces. While dogs cannot digest vegetable fibers they seem to have no problems in digesting the fish bones. One thing that you must be extra careful is fishing hooks that is normally in the head of some fish.

*to be cont'd....food shortages during the war and its effect to Akita.

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