

The Akita Dog's Roots in Southern Akita

As Seen By Tamejiro Ishibashi, Kiyoshi Komatsu, Ryoichi Ohara, Mutsuo Okada and
Kaneharu Miyahara (Editor of *The Aiken Journal*)

Part IV

Translator's Comments

The difficult search for pure Japanese dogs in the deep mountain areas involved Japanese dogs in three size categories, the small, medium and the large. Among these Japanese dogs, the Akita dog's purity was affected most, owing to their being crossbred mostly with the Tosa fighting dog. The Tosa fighting dog was a breed created from the crossbreeding of the medium Japanese dog with large western dogs, in order to produce a powerful fighting dog. The appearance of the Japanese dog in the Tosa fighting dog was not a consideration.

According to the panelists, the original Akita dogs were probably not much larger than the larger medium Japanese dogs. The goal of the early Japanese Akita dog pioneers was to restore and increase the size of the Akita dog to the standard, while preserving the characteristics of the Japanese dog. By trying to remove the western dog characteristics seen mostly in the larger impure type of Akita dog, they are breeding toward the primitive Japanese Akita dog described in the standard. This, in Japan, the Japanese Akita dogs seem to undergo marked changes from decade to decade.

To those unacquainted with this aspect of Japanese dog history, the Japanese are ever changing their style and their standards to meet that goal.

The goal of the true Akita breeder is to restore the Akita dog toward the Japanese dog standard that was established at the beginning. Periodic revisions of the standards have been made to clarify vague points, but the basic goal of restoration and the standard have not changed, according to these panelists and other Japanese dog fanciers.

However, occasional deviations from the standard have occurred as a given popular bloodline sets the trend for a time until their faults are recognized and attempts made to correct them.

Different interpretations of a given standard by different judges and breeders may also contribute to these deviations.

Again, the emphasis is on the goal of improving and restoring toward the primitive Japanese dog described in the dog standard.

The panelists continue their discussion on the course of breeding taken by the Japanese large dog breeders regarding coat colors and form.

I am again grateful to Mr. Kaneharu Miyahara for granting his permission to present these series to the English speaking Akita dog world.

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Panel: Mutsuo Okada, Tamejiro Ishibashi, Kiyoshi Komatsu, Ryoichi Ohara and
Kaneharu Miyahara (Editor of *The Aiken Journal*)

Okada: We are now wandering into a general discussion of dogs. Do you mind?

Editor: Not at all.

Ishibashi: Breeding male dogs and bitches with large heads may result in dogs with loose joints. Fortunately, Akiho bitches do not tend to have large heads now.

Komatsu: This comes from Kumomaru's bloodline. Kumomaru was bred to many Akikyo-type females.

Ishibashi: These became the foundation bitches.

Komatsu: This is one reason Akiho has many excellent bitches today.

Ohara: I agree.

Ishibashi: However, too much emphasis is often placed on a dog's show record. That should not be the main goal if one wants to enjoy the Akita dog more fully as a hobby. He who becomes upset because his dog placed second has no real deep interest in dogs.

Okada: True.

Komatsu: However, unfortunately, that is the recent trend.

Editor: Competitive behavior is very evident at the Akiho's headquarters shows. On the other hand, one would not want to see only a few entries, either.

Almost all of the dogs at the recent Akikyo shows are white. Since brindles are not shown, red dogs have also become scarce.

Komatsu: Akikyo showed brindles until only recently. If brindles are eliminated, nothing will remain. Since whites come from brindles such as Tamagumo, could removal of that base lead to strange results?

Okada: The brindle is still included in the Akikyo standard.

Komatsu: Those who disagreed with Mr. Ishihara on black brindles are no longer with Akikyo. However, it is unfair to blame Mr. Ishihara only.

Ishibashi: One should try to produce a brindle that meets Mr. Ishihara's (see photograph in Part II, Akita World September/October 1994) requirements. This is very difficult.

Okada: Rejection of the brindle at Akikyo may not be based only on coat color, but on other faults associated with the brindle.

Ishibashi: Yes. I believe Mr. Ishihara is not rejecting the brindle on color alone.

Okada: I believe Mr. Ishihara would have so stated if brindles were to be deleted from the standard. This question of brindles has been discussed very frequently. Dogs not shown cannot be evaluated.

Editor: Would you say that black brindles in recent Akiho shows have improved markedly?

Komatsu: Yes.

Okada: How dark should a "shimofuri-tora" ("pepper and salt" brindle) of Akiho be?

Ishibashi: Kumohibiki (see photograph in Part III, Akita World January/February 1995) is a good example. Would you say that his coat differs from the brindle coat that is not well accepted by Akiho today?

Editor: Unlikely.

Komatsu: A blacker brindle is preferred.

Editor: Some excellent light black "pepper and salt." Brindles have appeared in the Akiho shows.

Okada: When I first saw Tamagumo, his black coat appeared as if it had frost sprinkled here and there. From a distance, he resembled a brindle. This feature may have led some to say that his coat was similar to "pepper and salt." Other brindles have very distinct stripes.

Ishibashi: Would you say that Tamagumo's brindle coat is rarely seen today? Brindle coats of today are more distinct.

Komatsu: Yes. The "pepper and salt" brindles of today have more distinct stripes than Tamagumo's.

Okada: Terminology changes. In those days, Tamagumo was called a "pepper and salt" brindle.

Editor: Today, the so-called "pepper and salt" brindles have distinct stripes.

Okada: The "pepper and salt" brindle is not mentioned in the dog standard.

Editor: You are correct. Only the word "brindle" is mentioned.

Okada: Just as yellow red is not mentioned, red brindle is not mentioned in the standard. The Akikyo standard divides the brindle into black, yellow and red categories.

Ishibashi: Akiho accepts the moderate red brindle. More recently, Akiho has accepted runny colors also.

Komatsu: True.

Ishibashi: Runny colors have been placed in dogs shows, I do not favor them.

Okada: We certainly do not favor such colors. They are carryovers of Arawashi's Tenboshi (Tensei). We had believed that the popularity of that color was gone forever.

Ishibashi: The most important problem is the faded brindle coat. Although such dogs are eventually not placed as they mature, puppies with faded coat colors are being placed in the yoken (6-10 months) class.

Okada: Those dirty appearing coats are not desirable. I label them as "dusty" brindles.

Editor: Dirty appearing brindles coats are not desirable.

Ohara: I agree. These were carryovers from Tamagumo and Goromaru, when they were die only dogs available then. Good foundation dogs were scarce at that time.

Okada: Mr. Miyahara, what is your opinion on the Akita dogs shown today?

Editor: They have certainly improved.

Komatsu: At Akiho, with its large number of entries, many excellent dogs are seen.

Editor: Facial features, coat color and body form have improved greatly.

Okada: Would you say that too much emphasis is placed on a dog's show record?

Editor: Many people enter their dogs for that reason only.

Komatsu: This is quite different from our day. Today, one often "mixes" a good bloodline with bloodlines of show winning dogs. Would you say that this is an inevitable trend?

Okada: The number of dogs have increased.

Editor: Also, almost no given bloodline is predominant today. This is unlike the past with bloodlines such as Azumagumo, Kumomaru or Tetsuyuki, for example. Local rivalries seem a thing of the past.

Ishibashi: That is true.

Okada: I believe that the improvements today are partly due to better transportation and immunization against distemper. This has led to a great increase in the number of dogs within a few years. In the past, one lost many of their dogs soon after birth or after entering the dog in a dog show. They often prepared for the worst. Nowadays, one rarely loses a dog from distemper.

Komatsu: Many can take advantage of today's advanced form of transportation. In the past, sending dogs great distances for breeding was a rarity. Today, they are transported usually by air or by auto.

Ishibashi: Local breeding is a trend of the past.

Okada: In those days, oyabuns (boss or chief) had kobuns (protégés or followers) caring for the oyabun's bitch. When a bitch was in heat, his own male dog was used for breeding and the puppies were sold by the oyabun. The oyabun paid for upkeep of dogs. Such arrangements are not necessary today.

Editor: Such localizations have disappeared and things are now more standardized.

Komatsu: This is true also of society in, general. Class distinctions are less today. One was unable to pay a stud fee of 50,000 yen (\$139 at 360 yen/\$1.00), say, for Kongo, unless one was an oyabun in the past. Today, many can afford to pay 70,000 yen or more.

Okada: Kongo's (see photograph in Part I, Akita World July/August 1994) stud fee was 50,000 yen. Tsukasa's (see photograph in Part I) fee was 60,000 yen in Tokyo, while Hobun's (see photograph) fee was 35,000 yen. In the late 1940s, the average monthly salary of a new university graduate was about 7,000 or 8,000 yen. Wasn't there a popular song, "Gekkyu Ichiman Happyakuen" ("Making Thirty Bucks A Month") back in 1959 or 1960? (Laughter)

Ishibashi: Had one spent that money on real estate, instead of on dogs, just imagine how better off financially would one be today. (Laughter)

Okada: In those days, one could have purchased a race horse with such prices. Race horses are still in demand. However, stud and puppy fees have not changed much in 25 years.

Komatsu: They have not changed.

Okada: One cannot become wealthy nowadays by selling dogs. A new graduate today earns about 1,500,000 yen (about \$4167 at \$360 yen/\$1.00) a year. Wouldn't you say that 1,500,000 yen for a dog is rather prohibitive?

Ishibashi: No. I disagree. A dog worth 1,500,000 yen is very difficult to find within a lifetime. Rarely would a person be willing to sell such a valuable dog.

Okada: I was shocked when Mr. Tadamoto, who owned Tamagumo, told me that Mr. Ota of Osaka paid 1,600,000 yen (about \$4444 at 360 yen/\$1.00) for Monjumaru (see photograph). Kongo's owner, the late Mr. Heihachi Hashimoto, wrote years ago that no matter how much he earned from Kongo, he was unable to save any money, due to expenses. Would you say that this is also true of other breeders? Mr. Hashimoto quit the dog business after the death of Kongo. He used to say, "If Go-chan (Kongo) goes, I also go." He was a very cheerful person.

Editor: Do very many amateur dog breeders turn professional?

Ishibashi: Many professional dog breeders began as amateurs. I began as an amateur because of my fondness for dogs. The late Mr. Kanbe was fond of Moku (see photograph) and Tetsuyuki (see photographs in Part III). However, Mr. Kanbe was not the professional dog dealer type.

He treated Moku and Tetsuyuki as family. Mr. Kanbe and many dog breeders today seem to prefer dogs over human beings. A fine dog is difficult to produce, and any dog not up to his expectations were sold.

Komatsu: A true professional leaves no doubt of his ability. True professionals are rare. However, many true dog lovers have contributed much to the dog world. Mr. Kubo is an example. He was an associate of mine, who cared for Tetsuyuki at his home and not at my home. When I saw Dr. Ishiguro (1966 American Akita Breeders first match show judge, 1975 Los Angeles Akiho show judge) off on his first trip to Los Angeles, I returned Kumomaru (see photographs in Part III) and his dam, Matorame (Makome) (see photograph in Part III), to Mr. Watanabe. Since Mr. Kubo and I are good friends, Tetsuyuki was kept in Yuzawa then. At that time, someone asked me if Tetsuyuki was a very good dog. I replied, "He has some faults." However, Mr. Kyono, who was still in health, then said, "Tetsuyuki has some good points. You should use him."

Okada: Mr. Kyono kept Tetsuyuki and Shinme for a while and later offered them to Mr. Sasai. These dogs were about five months old then and had the "kurakake" (black fur line in the saddle area of the back).

Therefore, Mr. Sasai refused to take them, and frankly told Mr. Kyono that he did not want any dogs with such "kurakake." (Laughter)

Editor: They were good dogs otherwise.

Okada: Tetsuyuki was well trained and exercised. A photograph of him at Yuzawa when he was ten years old shows that his body structure had not deteriorated.

Ishibashi: Tetsuyuki was not widely used as a stud dog in this region.

Okada: No suitable bitches were found.

Ishibashi: He was used only twice or thrice in our area.

Okada: Tetsuyuki became a popular and successful stud dog in Tokyo. Moku (see photograph) preceded him there.

Komatsu: Moku won the Tokuyu award at the Akiho headquarters show.

Ishibashi: Tetsuyuki won first place in the Overall Class at Akikyo.

Ohara: Some dogs actually had luck on their side.

Komatsu: However, in today's world, not much room is left to luck. Everything moves at a faster pace.

Okada: Recently the NHK-TV did a documentary on five Arabian thoroughbred horses that were originally introduced into England, to develop thoroughbreds. Although the present stock is supposedly from these original five horses, reportedly, only two are directly related to the original thoroughbreds. The remaining three originals have not relationship to the horses of today. This is the trend with the passing of time. Although several stud dogs were used at the beginning, it is difficult to determine how much of a certain bloodline runs through the Akita dogs of today, since they were bred to only a limited group. As mentioned previously, an example is the close linebreeding of *Daiunme and *Hoppohime. The male stock goes back to the Ichinoseki line. Mr. Kiyojiro (Seiji) Sato's Akaishime (see photograph) went to Akaishihime (see photograph in Part II) to Ohideme to *Makome (Masachime) to *Daiun to *Daiunme. Another bloodline went from Akaishime to *Daisanshiranami to *Hokutomimaru to "Hoppohime. (*See photographs in Part III)

Komatsu: It is a matter of careful breeding of the bitches. One should not use a bitch merely to produce show dogs.

Ishibashi: With time, one begins to notice the quiet elegant refined character of the multiparous bitch. A fine dog cannot be produced by merely letting the dog stand on concrete, putting on a 50,000 yen (about \$138) dog collar, a gaudy gold-braided leash and feeding choice beef. (Laughter) After several litters, some dog owners may say to her, "you are no longer of use to me," and then allow her to roam. With the rice harvest in the fall, she begins to glow, without any collar, under the red skies of the setting sun. If a human being, she may be wondering where her children are tonight. Her quiet figure reveals the elegancy so desirable in a dog.

Komatsu: That may be too much for one to expect today.

Ishibashi: True. (Laughter)

Komatsu: A fine dog must be produced through good bloodlines. However, one cannot usually fully predict the final outcome of a puppy until the dogs are fully mature.

Okada: Bankomaru's black mask turned to gray white. With the appearance of the frosty features, the term "shibui" (quiet elegant refined character) was coined. Restless and sweet young dogs are certainly not refined. At six or seven years of age, they almost suddenly turn white to reveal their "shibui" (quiet subdued, refined) character.

Ishibashi: The other day, I went to Sawauchi during Mr. Okada's visit to our area. Sawauchi is the place of origin of the yellowish red dog with the white mask. A very wonderful place, where one can produce dogs with white masks.

(Laughter) A
wonderful place if one enjoys dog breeding.

Editor: Those interested in small and medium dogs often traveled to their respective places of origin to study them.

Okada: That is true. Immediately after the war, Mr. Katsusuke Ishihara (see photograph in Part II) was one of the Akita dog enthusiasts who did just that. To restore the Akita dog, he revisited the home of the well-known hunter, Mr. Sentaro Takafuji (see photographs). Sawauchi Village is an ancient village separated by a mountain pass in a place called Goshō. A famous hunting dog called Sentaroaka (see photograph) lived here just before the war. There was also a dog called Kesakichi (see photograph), which was later obtained by Mr. Toju (or Fujiji) Hirashima (see photographs in Part II), who renamed it Funi (Fuji). Funi had very keen senses.

Before the war, Mr. Ishihara went to Sawauchi to wait for Mr. Takafuji to return from his hunting trip. He waited and waited. After four days of waiting, a disappointed Mr. Ishihara headed home. Such enthusiast to obtain information. Mr. Komatsu, didn't you go along with him once?

Komatsu: Yes. I accompanied him. Times have changed since Mr. Ishihara's days.

Ishibashi: Therefore, very few individuals such as Mr. Ishihara have traveled such great distances to gather detailed information about the Akita dog.

Okada: Such quest for knowledge was prompted by articles in the earlier issues of the *Nippo Monthly Bulletin*, which frequently posed the question, "Where are the Japanese dogs"? This led to the assignments of individuals to different regions. For example, Mr. Ozaki was assigned to the Yamage Region. Transportation was poor. One had to go by foot or bicycle then. Shikoku Island wrote about their search for dogs similar in appearance to Kusunoki-go (see photograph) and described the hardships they encountered. They showed the dogs they brought back from the mountains. Also, no adequate photographic equipment was available then. Dog standards had not yet been established. The earlier issues of the *Nippo Monthly Bulletin* often had photographs of large baggy eared dogs with captions such as Mr. So-and-so's loving dog, etc. As mentioned previously, breeding of two medium dogs often resulted in larger dogs. At other times, breeding of a medium dog with a small dog resulted in smaller dogs. I heard that Mr. Tatsuo Nakajo brought dogs from the Shinshu (Nagano) area and did all kinds of experiments, including the trimming of ears. This was an era of groping in the dark. The finding of a few pure dogs by chance, in certain areas started the movement toward the right path. I have developed a great respect for our predecessors.

Mr. Tatsuji Ito says that Mr. Kyono once went to the home of a charcoal dealer to purchase dogs. Unable to find any dogs, they returned with some charcoals they had purchased. (Laughter)

Ishibashi: Although they wanted to purchase the dogs from the charcoal dealer, the dogs would not emerge from under the wooden floor, even after their waiting patiently for three days. They, therefore, brought back two sacks of charcoal for their relatives, who were told that these were dogs that transformed into charcoals. (Laughter) Such humor is rare today. In spite of criticisms and agitations at dog shows, everyone maintained a sense of humor with their hard work in those days. Today, not only do we see lack of humor, but occasional violence.

Okada: How true. The question often asked in those days was, "Where are the Japanese dogs?," in spite of the existence of an organization called the Nipponken Hozonkai (Nippo). Only two dogs with ears which finally stood were recorded in the Odate area at the time. Not very erect, but standing reluctantly, sad and tearfully. (Laughter) Before the Akita dog was recognized as a large Japanese dog, our predecessor's work required much effort. I certainly must commend them for that.

Ishibashi: About twenty years ago, many of the wealthy from Tokyo eagerly purchased many Akita dogs. The most active among these was Mr. Sakushige Takamizawa, who also had much difficulties in finding suitable dogs. Finally, for a large sum, he purchased Mr. Yugoro Izumi's Izumi No Nidaikin (Kin II of Izumi), which had placed third overall at the Akikyo headquarters show. After seeing the dog, Mr. Kyono said to me, "Tamechan" (Mr. Ishibashi's informal first name), Mr. Takamizawa has a very poor dog. Tell him not to enter it in the show." I complied immediately. As a representative of that bloodline, the dog's face was loose with "folding screens" standing at the outside corners of both eyes. However, Mr. Takamizawa replied, "Humph! Mr. Kyono is in name only and does not know much about dogs." Mr. Takamizawa then entered the dog in the

show and the dog was not called. He remained calm by saying, "My Nidaikin is a super dog. He will win. The judges are now trying to determine second place and dogs below that." He was finally called out and placed at the end of the line. The final announcement was made and his dog was ranked low in the Junyu (Good) Class. (Laughter) Mr. Takamizawa's legs trembled as he led his dog out of the ring. (Laughter) Nidaikin was immediately sent to parts unknown. (Laughter)

Okada: Mr. Kyono's reputation rose rapidly from that time on. (Laughter) Many dogs were purchased at high prices from various sources, but none seemed to be of much value. Many such dogs soon faded away from the scene. Thus, the phrase, "Going out to 'royal pastures'" was coined. No one seems to have purchased as many dogs as Mr. Takamizawa and Mr. Ide, who lived nearby. Finally, a dog by the name of Tamaisami, which was originally bought without much enthusiasm by the owner, became a show winner. Didn't the dog cost over 10,000,000 yen (\$27,778 at 360 yen/\$1.00)?

A dog dealer once showed me a photograph of young Tanihibiki and said to me, "This time I'm showing you a fine dog." I replied, "I know this dog. This dog is Tani." With a silly grin, the dealer replied, "So you know. But the real dog is better." (Laughter)

Ishibashi: Once, while trying to find a name for his dog, Mr. Takamizawa wanted to name the dog "Gankai" ("Touring Face"), because the dog's facial expression was very interesting to him. Mr. Takamizawa had plans to tour Japan with the dog like a touring Buddhist priest. (Laughter)

Komatsu: That dog was one of Tamagumo's offsprings.

Ishibashi: Since we were planning to stop showing brindles after this dog, we considered the name Torasumi (India Ink Brindle). Phonetically in Japanese, Sumi also means "the end" or "Finish." I finally named the dog Benkei.

Komatsu: Yes, I do remember that.

Ishibashi: At that time, the Akita dog breed seemed to be in its last throes and so was Benkei. Whenever one saw Benkei, someone commented that the Akita dog breed was doomed. (Laughter)

Okada: When Benkei was finally shown, Kitano-o (see photograph in Part III) won first place in the Puppy Class, while Nanun (see photograph in Part III) placed second. Benkei was not even placed. (Laughter)

Ishibashi: Another humorous incident is associated with Mr. Takamizawa when he said to me, "Tame-chan, when you make any comments about someone's dog, be careful so that the dog owner may not become offended." "How should I go about it then?" I replied. He said, "Tame-chan, if the dog is faulty, just say 'yamabushi' (mountain priest), 'Why?' I asked. According to him, 'yamabushi' also could mean 'to cover oneself with a shellfish when raining' or Kaikaburi." Phonetically in Japanese "kaikaburi" could also refer to a (mountain priest)," the dog owner may take it as a compliment and may buy you a beer. (Laughter) Such humor, lacking nowadays, kept us going in those days.

Another humorous story tells about Mr. Ide, the dealer of Chinese herbs, who purchased three puppies from a dog dealer who had a bitch with a very long coat.

Okada: Some dog dealer had told him that this type of dog was very rare. Thus, believing that he had a great find, Mr. Ide eagerly bought all three puppies, believing he had three possible champions.

Ishibashi: Didn't he also jump up and down by the puppies in the whelping box?"

Okada: Yes. He was testing to see if these dogs were of Champion quality. The jumping test was used to eliminate any timid dogs. (Laughter)

Ishibashi: Probably no one purchased as many dogs as Mr. Takamizawa. It seems that every dog dealer in Japan had contacted Mr. Takamizawa. Whenever a dog dealer came to his front door with a dog, he would tell the dog dealer that he was not interested and would retreat to the back of his house where another dog dealer was waiting for him at the back door. Resignedly, he would offer to each dealer 10,000 yen (about \$28 at 360

yen/\$1.00) to stop bothering him and go away, when he was not interested in buying any dogs that day. (Laughter)

Okada: Once, he lost interest in one of his dogs. He gave it to a dog dealer, who sold it. After making the rounds of several dog shops, the dog was brought back to his house by another dog dealer. Mr. Takamizawa noticed some fine qualities in the dog. He, therefore, purchased it immediately. Mr. Takamizawa noticed now quickly this dog adapted to his household. After all, it was his former dog. (Laughter)

Ishibashi: Mr. Takamizawa would say to me, "You can't seem to obtain any good dogs, because you offer too much money. I'm just about to go and purchase a dog. Follow me and watch how I do it." I followed him to a very famous kennel. He did a quick survey of the available puppies, selected a puppy, held it firmly in his hands and said, "I'm taking this dog with me. Never discuss price." He took the dog home in his arms. He received the bill later. When we asked him about it, he replied, "#*&@! He overcharged me!" (Laughter) He was not very happy with the dog either. (Laughter)

Ohara: Paying several ten thousand yen (10,000 yen = about \$28 at 360 yen/\$1.00) for a puppy in those days was very exorbitant.

Ishibashi: Yes. Almost everyone had a sense of humor in those days, in spite of being overcharged. If a person is overcharged today, he may become violent.

Okada: People were more relaxed in those days.

Ishibashi: Yes. We had more fun in those days.

Okada: For example, when a dog's eye colors were light, the mischievous jeweler (referring to Mr. Tadamoto) advised the dog owner to be generous with carrots. Sasai-san took this advice seriously and almost overfed her dog with carrots. Whoever heard of curing red eyes with carrots? (Laughter)

Ishibashi: A friend once asked me to help him purchase a dog. I made the necessary arrangements through a third party. However, owing to circumstances beyond my control, I was unable to go to the seller to examine the dog. My dog buyer friend later telephoned me and asked, "Tame-chan, what do you think of the dog?" I replied, "I was busy and unable to see the dog. But, don't you worry," My friend replied, "How can I buy a dog without worrying?"

The dog was delivered to my friend soon thereafter. "How do you like your new dog?" I asked. "Well, Tame-chan, as I walked to the post office, I wondered if I should send you the money for the dog or not. I did not send it," said he. I said "Why didn't you send it?" He replied, "I haven't decided whether the dog is worth it." I said, "Don't be ridiculous! I want the money right now!"

To this he replied, "I'm in the loan business and have as much money as you need to borrow." (Laughter)

When I reminisce about such give and takes over the telephone, this reminds me of something out of a comic strip. We enjoyed working with our dogs in those days.

Editor: In those days, we probably had more time to relax and ponder.

Okada: Yes, some of that humor was probably due to ignorance then also.

Translated by Tatsuo Kimura with the permission of Mr. Kaneharu Miyahara, editor of the Aiken Journal (Akita World, March/April 1995)

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