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Newsletter – Looking Back on 2013

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- **Travel from End to End**

Since my young days, covering ‘from end to end’ has been the principle of my travels. It all began with mountain climbing. I started climbing those mountains where general hikers usually go, such as Mt. Mitake and Mt. Kawanori, situated in Okutama, in the ‘backyard’ of Tokyo individually. Then I went on to walking along the ridges of these mountains, i.e. Okutama range, from end to end, [50 km to the west of Tokyo, 1000-1500 m above sea level] first, followed by the Okuchichibu range [100 km, 1500 to 2500 m], which stretches from Mt. Kumotori, Mt. Kobushi and further to Mt. Kinpu; the Yatsugatake range [150 km, 2000 to 2900 m]; and the Northern Alps [200 km, 2500 to 3200 m].

As regards travels in Japan, the junior and senior high school I went to (a school attached to the then Tokyo University of Education, now renamed as the University of Tsukuba), consistently placed a great emphasis on regional study through school excursions, and those held every year for six years brought me to various places from Tohoku to Kansai regions. Later, every time as my father moved from Tokyo to Hiroshima, Nagoya and Osaka because of his transference, I enjoyed traveling in areas near where he lived during school vacations. By the time I was graduated from university, the total number of prefectures I had been to exceeded 30, including those I visited for plant visits or travels with my friends to Chugoku and Kyushu regions. After I came to work in the world of quality management, the number of business trips rose sharply. Although it appeared as though I had visited many different areas, however, I realized one day that I had visited the same prefectures over and over again. After that, I made sure to visit those prefectures I had never been to before if they were near the place I went on business, and as a result, I finished covering all the prefectures except Akita. After all, it was 10 years or more afterwards when I visited Akita, because there was no opportunity to bring me there before that. Later, in the early 90’s as I took the driving license in the US and had it converted into the Japanese one, I started the project of driving in all 47 prefectures in Japan, which took me around 10 years to complete (using rented cars in Okinawa and Hokkaido.)

My first trip to the US was in 1977, and since the mid-80’s my visits there

became frequent. Although I had made a total of 30 trips to the US by the end of 1990, the total number of states covered was less than 20, making me realize that I had visited fewer states than I felt I had. Thus my project of visiting all 50 states from 'end to end' began, which I completed in 2002. Another project of driving through every state was also begun, but it was stopped after covering 49 states, leaving only the state of North Carolina, when Dr. Juran suggested that 'it is no good to be too perfect' and I should stop there.

The principle of 'end to end' has been implemented in other countries as well. In Thailand, I visited close to 30 provinces out of the total of 76, but I stopped the endeavor because there are far too many provinces there and their names are too difficult to remember.

In China, Fujian Province, which is regarded as the base of overseas Chinese, became the 19th province added to my list in 2013. 12 provinces remain to be visited for completing the project of visiting all 31 provinces in Mainland China.

With regard to India, I divided 28 states into 2 parts: 20 states laid across the Indian peninsula from north to south; and 8 located in the north east area to the east of West Bengal State, and the project for visiting the 20 states in the peninsula is currently in progress. In 2013, I visited Goa State, which was once a Portuguese colony. Clean and neatly arranged streets and avenues, unlike those I had found in other states I visited before, impressed me. The fact that alcoholic drinks are easily available, which are hard to come by in other states, was also very pleasing for a drinker like me. There remain 7 states to complete this project.

While I was involved deeply in the 'end to end' projects in China and India, I remembered I had forgotten about Taiwan where I visit as frequently as these two countries. I checked my record to find out that I had already visited 14 counties out of the total of 22 in Taiwan by 2012. I accelerated my pace in 2013 and visited 4 counties in March and July, and during the visit from the end of October, which was my 100th visit to Taiwan (the first was in 1962), I visited Penghu, Miaoli, and Kinmen counties, only to leave Lienchiang county (Matsu Island) in the north of Taiwan Strait.

- **Health**

Stomach cancer was found during my routine annual health checkup in February, and I had the cancerous mucous lesion removed by endoscope in mid-March. It was diagnosed as an early stomach cancer of Stage Zero, and I was allowed to start for a business trip to Korea on the second day after going home from 5 days of stay

in hospital. I was relieved when an examination by endoscope in June proved that the prognosis was favorable. This is truly a good example of early detection and early treatment bringing about good results.

In the months that followed, I led my usual life of repeating to and fro my home and Narita/Haneda airports, but in the second week of July, I felt unwell and visited my home doctor at his clinic. An examination showed a high white blood cell count (Friday, July 12). That is my last memory before the next one, in which I found myself on a bed in a hospital. What follows is an explanation given to me by my family: I had been in hospital already for two weeks. On July 15th I had high fever and dyspnea, and rushed to the hospital by ambulance. It was a very serious case of pneumonia, and the physician in charge told my family that there was little hope for my recovery, and that I may live for one week at most, and so the family should be mentally prepared, by which my family was stunned. While I was hovering between life and death, a therapy was tried, which worked and eventually succeeded in removing artificial respirator, bringing my miraculous recovery. All this sounded as if it was about somebody else, because I had no memory whatsoever during those two weeks.

Although the recuperation period after my memory returned was very frustrating to me, my recovery seemed to be amazing in the eyes of my family, as well as my relatives, students and friends who had come to say farewell to me at my deathbed. In the end of August, X-ray observation presented no problems, and I was discharged from the hospital. Having lost over 10 kg of my weight and my muscles having grown weaker, it took a great effort to walk, after many bed-stricken days living only on IV.

After being discharged from hospital, I devoted myself to physical rehabilitation including training for walking, as well as to swallowing training to prevent aspiration pneumonia. To my relief, I could feel my body regaining strength remarkably week by week. When I timidly asked my doctor at the next visit after one month if I could go abroad for business, he casually said OK despite my anticipation. Permission was also given for drinking limited amount of alcoholic drinks. This truly made me feel I was living for the first time. Illness had brought an unexpected byproduct: reduction of my body weight by 5 kg, a long-standing problem for me. I gradually resumed working slowly from around November. As I started working, however, it became more difficult to maintain my reduced body weight. I have increased the frequency of gym-going and currently working out to maintain the byproduct.

I had a plan to travel from Europe to South America with my wife, Akiko, for a full month of August, but the travel around the world vanished like a mist. Ironically, an oxygen cylinder we had planned to use in Machu Picchu of Peru was useful in assisting my respiration, and I took comfort in watching a painting in the calendar (the waterfall of Iguacu in Brazil included in our travel plan) pasted on the wall of my hospital room. Akiko took care of me visiting my hospital, spending more than two hours travel back and forth every day for 45 days not skipping a single day, instead of enjoying the round-the-world trip.

Because of my hospitalization, I had to cancel many appointments, causing a great deal of inconveniences to the people concerned. For lectures which could not be canceled, my friends filled in for me not to leave my slot in seminars empty. Presents and warm words inquiring after my conditions gave me comfort and strength. I am thankful to all of them for their concern.

To think about my life of over 70 years, I have never contracted an illness serious enough to require hospitalization, except when I was a little child, soon after the end of the Second World War, as I suffered from dysentery together with many others evacuated together in a local area. The year 2013 brought home to me how important health is. It is all thanks to the dedicated nursing of my family, besides advancement of medicine, that I could recover my health, for which I am very grateful.

- **About Work**

The Deming Prize and the Deming Grand Prize: There were 9 winners of the Deming Prize (including 2 winners of the Deming Grand Prize), of which 5 were Japanese companies (including Meidoh Co., Ltd., a manufacturer of bolts and nuts located in Toyota city.) It was from around late 1990's when enthusiasm about TQM among Japanese companies started fading, leading to fewer companies applying for the prize, and after 2001, the situation continued where there was no or only one (or two as an exception) winner every year. We could, however, continue the examination because of applications made by overseas companies. This is proved by the fact that, of the total of 53 companies which received the Deming Prize during the 12 years from 2001 to 2012, there were only 10 Japanese companies. It is gratifying to note that, in 2013, there were 5 Japanese companies winning the prize and that Meidoh won the Deming Grand Prize as the first Japanese company after 7 years, thanks to the multi-faceted, unyielding efforts made by the Deming Prize Committee, the Union of Japanese Scientists and

Engineers, as well as other organizations concerned, with strong encouragement of Mr. Shoichiro Toyoda.

Among the companies winning the Deming Prize is SCG Logistics in Thailand, where I assisted in promoting TQM. It is the first winner in the service industry in this century. The new style of process management in which company utilizes GPS for safe operation of trucks might have drawn examiners' attention.

External Board Director of Komatsu Ltd.: Explanations about previous month's business performance and its background provided at every board of directors' meeting are global but organized in a compact manner, incorporating timely updates, and vividly reflecting the trend of the global economy. The board of directors' meeting is always very inspiring for me.

Lectures: The total number of lectures I gave in 2013 was 25: 8 in Japanese and 17 in English, which is about half of the previous year.

Overseas business trips: The total number of business trips abroad in 2013 was 11; total number of days spent: 93; and the total number of countries visited were 5: Thailand (5 times), India (3 times), Taiwan (3 times), China (2 times), and Korea (once). As a result, cumulative total number of business trips has become 332; the total number of days spent: 3,812 days; and the countries visited: 62.

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