

## *Analog pleasures in a digital world*

Scott Johnson

### **Part One, all roads lead to Kandai**

In the mid-1950s my family — father, mother and younger brother-- moved to Decatur, Alabama, a quiet, rather sleepy town bordering the Tennessee River. We were Northerners and were surprised and puzzled at many aspects of daily life in the segregated South. Public toilets came in three types: White Men, White Women, and Colored. The train station had two waiting rooms: White and Colored. In the downtown movie theater, the balcony was for Colored only. And public schools operated under what was euphemistically called the “Separate but equal” system, so Decatur High School had only white teachers and students. The passionate commitment to this system of segregation puzzled all of us Johnsons, but we were newcomers and felt we had to accept it and adjust.

This personal background is necessary to understand what I label Analog Pleasure One: Listen to adults, even fathers.

My father made it a rule to be home for dinner as much as possible. He was the Plant Manager of a chemical company that manufactured acrylic fibers, and table talk often centered on events at his workplace. In 1956 he told us that his company had made a contract with Mitsubishi Rayon in Hiroshima to build the first acrylic manufacturing plant in Japan. Dad had to select a team of men to go to Japan to supervise the construction of the entire plant, as an exact copy of the plant in Decatur. And while construction was progressing in Hiroshima, a team of young Mitsubishi engineers was to get training in how to manage such a factory safely and productively.

Before the arrival of the Mitsubishi team, there were two local problems my father had to face:1) In the eyes of local businesses, were Japanese people White or Colored? The answer to this would affect every detail of their lives in Alabama. And 2):He also had to stress to his management team that it was necessary to create as friendly and open an attitude as possible. Potential language problems were one worry, but the bigger worry had to do with war. They

would arrive in 1957, twelve years after the end of the Second World War, six years after the end of the Occupation. All of the Mitsubishi men were veterans of the Imperial Army or Navy; most of the American men at my father's company were veterans of the Pacific War. A dozen years before, these men had been deadly enemies, and now they needed to create a unified team spirit.

The first problem proved to be the easiest. My dad gave talks at the local Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and the Lions Club. He stressed that these men from Japan represented a famous company, that they expected to stay in the best hotels available, and would eat most meals in local restaurants. Money talk won the day: the Japanese were White.

I was sixteen when the Mitsubishi men arrived, and table talk at our home centered on problems of Japanese and American counterparts gaining trust and developing friendships, to make sure that all aspects of efficient and safe management techniques were successfully communicated. The chemicals used in making acrylic fibers are deadly, and the processes are complex. This was a case of English for special purposes, and my father was keen on making sure key information was successfully communicated.

One of the Mitsubishi men was exceptionally good at English, and the secret of his success had been listening to the US military radio programs broadcast from Iwakuni. His dream was to visit Nashville, Tennessee, and attend a performance of Grand Ol' Opry, the most famous country and western radio program at the time. The least proficient English speaker was paired with an ex-Marine who had nearly lost his life fighting the Japanese. Table talk sometimes consisted of daily reports on how these two men, step-by-step, came to like one another.

At the end of their stay, all the Mitsubishi men were invited to our house for a cocktail party. It was my only chance to connect faces with the names I'd heard about so often. It was my job to carry trays of whiskey and water to these thirsty men. And moving among them, I was keen to listen to as many conversations as possible.

As a result of all this table talk, and my one chance to see and listen to these men in person, I came to the conclusion that Japanese people were....normal. This discovery was a bit disappointing. I'd hoped for something at least a little bit exotic, but they wore suits on business days, and blue jeans on days off, just like everybody else. They missed their families, and argued about baseball. Foreign travel for middle class Americans was a rarity in 1957, but I found myself thinking, quite casually, that it might be fun to visit Japan sometime. This was my first step on the road to Kandai.

But I had urgent decisions to make. As my last year in high school began, I had to decide what I wanted to study, and where I wanted to go. I wanted to study two things, each quite



The shock of Russia's Sputnik made me want to become a scientist.

different. I had enjoyed performing in plays, both at my high school, and with a local amateur drama group. So, studying acting, directing and dramatic literature sounded exciting. But I was also fascinated with the study of animals, especially animals living in water. So, a degree in biology also appealed. It was at the time of Sputnik, and the “space race” turned me and my classmates into nationalists determined to beat the Russians in the sciences. So biology won out.

I was offered a small scholarship by Indiana University, and decided to go there, back to a part of America where I felt completely comfortable. Coming from a small high school to a big university was a pleasant shock. There were tests and essays to write during orientation. There were about three thousand of us entering first year students; who read all those essays? How did they decide which class to put us in? I didn't think about that at the time, but was puzzled to see that I had been placed in a second year English Composition class. I was even more surprised to see that there were only thirteen of us in this class. Ten minutes late, the teacher arrived, a rather short man with a bristling beard and a British accent. He wrote a sentence on the board, and said: “G.K. Chesterton is reputed to have said this. Did he? And if so, where and when? We shall meet next week at this time, when you shall report your discoveries.” He abruptly walked out of the room. There was a stunned silence. All thirteen of us looked at each other hoping to find a face that looked confident about what to do. No luck. I knew I wasn't in high school any more.

While waiting for the teacher to arrive, I'd begun talking with the student next to me, and we decided we should go to the main library, even though we had no idea what to do once there. At one desk there was a sign that said Research Librarian. Aha, I thought. So we went to her desk and showed her the sentence the teacher had written, and explained our homework. She looked at each of us for a moment, and then asked, "Are you in Michael Wolff's class?" We said yes, and she said, "I thought so. Now Michael Wolff is very careful with his words. Chesterton was a very popular writer, but Prof. Wolff said that Chesterton 'is reputed to have **said** this', not **written** this. Chesterton was also a very popular public speaker. Find out his dates, and have a look at those shelves over there of books containing famous speeches year by year." Within thirty minutes we had found the quote, and finished our homework.

We had also learned Analog Pleasure Two: Talk with Research Librarians. They are neglected by students, which makes them all the more eager to share information with people who ask for help.

Michael Wolff, with two doctorates, was editor of a journal called *Victorian Studies*. Week after week he gave us homework that seemed impossible at first, but introduced us to more and more of the secrets of libraries. It was the most exciting class of my first semester.

At the end of my first year, I was offered a scholarship from the American Museum of Natural History to assist a biologist known for fish and dolphin study. We would spend six weeks in the research lab at Marineland, and one week at the museum's laboratory facility on Bimini, in the Bahamas.

My boss knew I was mad about Ernest Hemingway's fiction. In the Bahamas, the legal drinking age was eighteen, so he and his wife took me to a bar called The Green Door. The bartender told me that when Hemingway came to Bimini, he always sat in the same seat, and always drank the same drink, called Planter's Punch. So I sat in Hemingway's seat, and drank Hemingway's favorite drink. It was made with rum, but also many fruit juices, so it was very easy to drink. I had another. And then another. I couldn't walk straight after this, and the next morning I experienced my first hangover. Our last morning in Bimini, I walked to the Marina, and was stunned to see the remains of a large marlin. It looked very much as I had imagined Santiago's big fish in *The Old Man and the Sea*: Something had eaten the meat off the fish and there was nothing left but the bones and the long swordlike snout.

But most of our research was done in Florida. My boss that summer, William N. Tivolgi, had been hired by the Office of Naval Research to tackle a problem of military importance. It was 1960, the height of the Cold War, and Russian submarines were coming closer and closer to the East Coast of the US. There was a fear that they would develop quiet motors, and come into

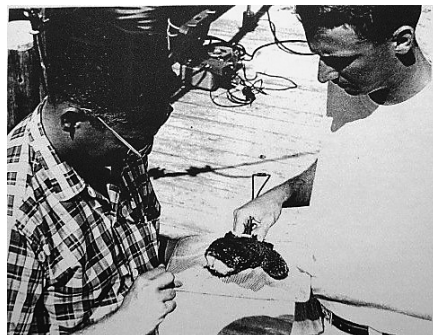
Chesapeake Bay, not far from Washington, D.C. The US Navy had placed underwater microphones on the seabed, to catch the sound of approaching submarines. There was shock and awe in the Pentagon when people listened to what the microphones picked up. The ocean, which Rachel Carson had called *The Silent World*, was filled with all sorts of noises, and the US Navy needed to tell the difference between natural sounds and enemy submarines filled with missiles.

The challenge was to prepare recordings of undersea noise-makers, natural sounds, and to identify what made those sounds. The Navy could then use capacitors to block those innocent sounds, making it possible to hear submarine motors. Hundreds of scientists were asked to record and identify sounds caused by fish, crabs, shrimp, dolphins and thousands of other noisy creatures. And so was I, happy and proud-and paid by the US Navy-to help prevent mischief by the Russkies.

This research field is now called marine bio-acoustics, but it had no name in 1960. Recordings and other data are now kept in a huge database called the marine sounds atlas. But our method of data gathering was much more analog: I rowed a small boat while Dr. Tavalga dangled a hydrophone in the water, listening for sounds with a headset. When he heard something, we went fishing. If we caught a fish, Dr. Bill listened again with the hydrophone, and if the sound was no longer heard, we hoped that meant we had caught the fish that made the sound. If the fish was alive, we put it into an aquarium and hoped it would repeat the sound in the laboratory. Occasionally we were lucky. We caught a toadfish after hearing an exceptionally loud noise,



Cutting edge science in 1960.



Dr. William N. Tavalga and me with an angry toadfish.

and in the boat, with a fish-hook still in its mouth, it made the same sound. Here we had proof linking a recorded sound with a particular animal. And so I learned a new Analog Pleasure: that scientific research is always ongoing, and that knowledge accumulates in small doses, sometimes using primitive but provable methods.

Back at Indiana University, I had a part-time job sorting fish. My boss had used nets to catch many fish, large and small, in certain rivers and streams in Indiana. He had done this for years, and now wanted to see if there had been any changes in the fish population over the years. So I spent three years, a few days each week, sorting fish. For adult fish this was easy, but baby bluegills and black bass, for example, look very much alike. I needed a binocular microscope for this, and learned how important it is to count the number of stiff spines and soft rays in the dorsal fin, and to measure the ratio of the diameter of the eye to the distance from the snout to the back of the gill covers. This was a new Analog Pleasure: Look carefully at small differences between things that seem similar; the differences may be important.

In an off-campus bookstore in 1962, in the same afternoon, I discovered Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading*, and a book of poetry by Gary Snyder. This led me to other reading, and I soon became intrigued at the influence of Asia, and Japan in particular, on modern American poetry, something else I was curious about.

Analog Pleasure: book browsing. I was a sophisticated reader, or so I thought. So I didn't think there would be any surprises in a book called the ABC of Reading. Then I opened the book, and my life changed. Here is an excerpt from Chapter One:

The proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists, that is careful first-hand examination of the matter, and continual COMPARISON of one 'slide' or specimen with another.

No man is equipped for modern thinking until he has understood the anecdote of Agassiz and the fish:

A . . . student . . . went to Agassiz. . . The great man offered him a small fish and told him to describe it.

Student: 'That's only a sunfish.'

Agassiz: 'I know that. Write a description of it.'

After a few minutes the student returned with the description . . . as found in textbooks of the subject.

Agassiz again told the student to describe the fish.

The student produced a four-page essay. Agassiz then told him to look at the fish.

At the end of three weeks the fish was in an advanced state of decomposition, but the student knew something about it.

All this stuff at the beginning of the book about fish! Clearly, I felt that Ezra Pound had written this book about poetry for me! A few paragraphs later, Pound wrote:

The first definite assertion of the applicability of scientific method to literary criticism is found in Ernest Fenollosa's *Essay on the Chinese Written Character*.

I made a mental note to find out more about this person called Ernest Fenollosa, but the timing was not good. As my senior year approached, I had finished all my undergraduate requirements in biology, and enrolled in one graduate class. If I had persisted in my fish studies, I might have become the American equivalent of Sakana-kun, but my long-standing fascination with the theater reasserted itself. I decided to do graduate study in speech and theater. The flexibility of American liberal arts education allowed me to make a fairly smooth transition. The September after I graduated in biology, I was able to enroll in the usual load of graduate classes in theater. And then in 1965 I went to Detroit to begin my doctoral study in speech and theater. And that's where I began to teach.

Wayne State University is located in the center of Detroit, and most students lived at home and traveled by bus, car or bicycle to the university. In this way, it's a little like Kandai. My teaching experiences there, however, were quite different from my teaching experiences in Japan. All my classes were in basic presentation techniques. The university put great stress on communication skills, and so every undergraduate, all 20,000 or so, was required to take at least one class in presentation. Most students took these classes in their freshman year, but many put it off till their senior year. Timing wasn't so important, but passing the class was required for graduation. So a typical class had students ranging in age from 18 to 22 or 23. But in my first class as a teacher, one of my students was a woman in her early fifties. At the end of that class a young student complained quietly that he didn't feel comfortable in a class with someone who looked like his mother. I told him to be patient, but in fact I was nervous, too. She looked like my mother. At the end of the next class, the woman asked to speak with me privately. She said she had gotten married as a high school student, and had raised several children. After the last of her children had started university, she had enrolled, since she'd always wanted a college education. But she wanted to drop my class, because she could feel the anxiety and even hostility of some of my students, who, she said, all looked like her children. I was unprepared

for this situation, but told her to wait a couple of weeks before deciding what to do. Through sharing the excitements and embarrassments of presentations in class, everyone got to know one another, and something miraculous happened. As the younger students came to trust my adult student, one at a time, they began to ask her for advice about topics they were afraid to talk about with their own mothers. By the end of the semester, she was the most popular student in the class. This was not an isolated case. The university intentionally placed adult undergraduate students in classes with recent high school graduates. In my classes, the pattern of that first class was repeated again and again: the age gap was bridged, and everyone profited from it.

One of my favorite grad classes at Wayne State University was called Oral Interpretation. We learned techniques of reading aloud from fiction and poetry, and the public reading — not performing — of plays. Reading aloud is an important part of family life for many parents, and of teaching, but in this class we were trained as public readers for live performances or radio. The poet Gary Snyder gave a reading of his poems in Detroit, and partly because many of his poems were about his life in Japan, my interest in Japan was re-awakened. A Detroit poet urged me to read a poetry magazine published in Kyoto, called *Origin*, to find more poems by Gary Snyder, and there I discovered a translation of the Noh play *Yashima*. My study of theater history included reading about Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki, but I had had difficulty understanding why people were excited about Noh from reading translations by Arthur Waley, and the Ezra Pound/Ernest Fenollosa book. This translation of *Yashima* was strikingly different. I began to correspond with Cid Corman in Kyoto. Cid and Will Petersen were the translators, and Cid urged me to get in touch with Will Petersen, who was teaching at Ohio State University, a few hours drive from Detroit. So I telephoned his office at Ohio State. Later, Will told me that he had not been in his office for months; he walked in and the phone rang, with me calling. This was my first mysterious experience in connection with the world of Noh. I met Will, and in addition to other draft translations he showed me dozens of notebooks about his lessons as an amateur performer of *shimai*, the dance of Noh.

For the first time, I began to seriously think about visiting Japan. Will had learned performance techniques handed down from teacher to student in an unbroken line from the time of Zeami. By that time in my life I had performed Shakespeare, but the Elizabethan acting tradition he helped form had been broken during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So, I wanted to study Noh in Japan, however briefly, to take part in that long tradition. That feeling was intensified when I was able to see two Noh plays performed in Chicago by Komparu school actors. But I had two problems: no money and no Japanese. A trip to Japan had to wait.



While studying for my doctoral qualifying exams, I needed part-time work. A friend took me to International House in Detroit, where the city of Detroit offered English classes to immigrants. Many of the students were housewives, whose husbands were in Detroit on business or to study. It was the emergency services in the city — police, fire and ambulance services — which had created these classes, in the hope that lives could be saved in emergencies if more people could speak basic English when telephoning for emergency help. So, with no training at all, I began to teach English to an eager group who knew no English at all. There were students from Morocco, Poland, France, Martinique, Spain and several Central and South American countries. The head teacher arranged the students so that no one was sitting next to someone who spoke their native language. A woman from Venezuela sat between a student from Poland and Martinique, for example. So, when I asked a student her name, she didn't understand, and looked right and left for help, she found puzzled faces but no whispered help. From the first moment of the first class the only common language was English. They learned fast, and I discovered a new and exciting teaching experience.

I passed my doctoral qualifying exams, and had to select a topic for my dissertation. My advisor told me that he had an excellent topic in mind for me: the history of theater in Indianapolis, Indiana from 1895 to 1915. Oh, dear. I asked to propose a different topic, and he gave me three weeks to come up with an alternative that he could approve of. I wanted to write about traditional Japanese theater, but had no specific topic in mind. I drove to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and went to the University of Michigan library. The open-stack library had excellent reference books on Japan in many languages. The copy machines in the library cost five cents a page. Almost every day for three weeks I drove to Ann Arbor, visited a bank to get ten dollars' worth of nickels, and went to the library. And during that time in the library I made a discovery: French speakers don't think like English speakers. At least that was true about people who wrote about Noh in French and English. Theater directors like Jacques Copeau, poets like Paul Claudel, actors like Jean-Louis Barrault all wrote about Noh as a profound acting tradition. English scholars like Basil Hall Chamberlain and Arthur Waley wrote about Noh as classic literature. Aha! I proposed a dissertation comparing a hundred years of French and English studies of Noh, and my proposal was accepted. Bye-bye Indianapolis!

At last I had reached ABD status. All finished But for the Dissertation. I was free to travel and teach wherever there was a job opening. Unfortunately for me, it was a time when there were very few university job openings in theater studies.

I visited Bloomington, Indiana, where I had lived, and studied for six years. I looked up old friends and teachers, asking for advice. I didn't want to sell used cars or start yoga classes, but

I knew I had to be flexible in my thinking. There was more to life than teaching. One former teacher who knew me well told me that a local millionaire had started a new newspaper: ***The Bloomington Courier-Tribune***. The wife of the owner was greatly fond of opera and musicals, and hoped the newspaper would hire someone who could write intelligently about such things. I had performed in musicals, and taken a class in opera directing, so I went for an interview. The managing director of the paper was a blunt speaking cigar-smoker. The Metropolitan Opera Company was soon going to perform at Indiana University, and he was under some pressure to publish a review of their performance, so my timing was good. But he told me that if I wanted full-time work, I would also have to telephone hospitals every day to find out who had been born, who had died, to check with the police about local crimes, to write about guest speakers at the local Rotary Club and Lions Club. He said, "You work for me, Johnson, and I'll make you a newspaperman." Somehow it sounded more like a threat than a promise. But I was desperate enough that I agreed to his terms. He showed me a desk with nothing on it but a typewriter, a telephone, and a dictionary, and told me it would be mine, starting the next day, at 6:30 AM.

I was there before 6:30, excited but very nervous. I had no background in journalism at all, and here I was at my desk in a newspaper office. My phone rang; it was the managing editor, my new boss. He said, "Johnson, come to my office. I gotta show you some things." He explained that a newspaper story was measured in inches. He showed me he meant inches of paper. There are short paragraphs and long paragraphs, but a "six inch story" was usually about six paragraphs long. This was new to me, but interesting. Then he said, "Now, we gotta talk about tools of the trade. You probably think that typewriter on your desk is the most important tool for a newspaperman, but if so, you're dead wrong. You can bang out a lot of words on a typewriter, but that's not the same thing as good writing. There are three other tools that you need for good writing, and here they are: a pair of scissors, a pot of paste, and most important, a big trash can. When you write for a deadline, a lot of what you write is gonna be crap. You catch that when you read over what you wrote. Cut it out and throw it in the trash. Keep the good stuff. Paste it on a new sheet of paper, with enough space between that you can type in a sentence or two connecting the good stuff. So that's it. Learn to love that trash can, and you'll get better and better at writing." He was right, too. So, I learned another Analog Pleasure. There is no "delete" button on a typewriter, but scissors did the trick, and so I learned the secret of good writing: cut/paste/trash.

Working on a newspaper also taught me to constantly rethink the main point of a story. One day I had finished twelve inches of copy on a news story, when my phone rang. It was the boss:

“Johnson, we just sold an ad that goes on the page under your story. Cut that thing down to six inches.” Half of what I’d written had to go. I learned that in most cases tightening up a news story improved it. I began to think about journalism as a career, but I got a letter from an old friend who was teaching in Canada. A theater history teacher was going to take a leave of absence for two years, and they were looking for a replacement.

So I applied, and after an exchange of letters, I flew to Edmonton for an interview. My theater history credentials were good, but I noticed that the man who was leaving had stuck to the Western theater tradition. He had taught nothing about performance traditions in India or China or Japan. I wanted to include Asia in my curriculum. It was a very pleasant interview, and at the end the Theater Department chairman said he would pick me up later at my hotel, and we would have dinner at his home, “and a few drinks till it gets dark.” I didn’t realize that this last comment was a joke. Edmonton, Alberta, is about 800 kilometers north of the continental US. It was late in June, about the time of the longest day in the year. I didn’t fully appreciate how important that combination of place and date were until later. We had a lovely dinner, and some scotch and water afterward. And then another, and another. I started to get very drunk, and then I looked at my watch. It was 10:30 at night and the sun was still up. The chairman saw the puzzlement in my face and laughed and said, “Welcome to Canada in the summer, Scott. If you keep drinking till sundown, you’ll be in bad shape tomorrow. Go back to your hotel and come to my office tomorrow morning at ten.” The sun went down about midnight. And it came up at 2:30 in the morning. This was a very exotic experience. The next morning, the chairman asked me to sit down while he made a telephone call. He phoned the Dean of the Humanities Faculty, and he told the Dean he wanted to hire an American teacher. The Dean apparently asked a question, was happy with the answer, and when the Chairman hung up, he said, “You’re hired. Congratulations.” I was delighted, but also curious about the question the Dean had asked. “He asked if any Canadians with equal qualifications had applied, and I said no.” I was very impressed with the speed and efficiency of all this, not to mention the power of chairmen and deans at the University of Alberta. So, a couple of months later, I drove to Edmonton, and started my first full-time job as a teacher.

Shortly before the beginning of my second year in Edmonton, I saw a poster announcing that anyone who wanted to study beginning Japanese should go for an interview at a certain time and place. I went, and explained that I was a full time teacher, but that I hoped to go to Japan in the future, and therefore wanted to learn some Japanese. It was explained that classes were taught on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and after a few weeks there would be a two-hour tutorial every Wednesday. In addition, the teacher said I should plan on

four hours of study for every hour in the classroom. This sounded so heavy that I was sure she was exaggerating. I was accepted as a student, and then learned that there were only three other students. At the first class, the handouts were in Romanized Japanese. First homework: memorize hiragana. From the second day handouts were in hiragana; from the second week, in hiragana and kanji. Four hours of study for each hour in class was about right. Our Canadian teacher of Japanese, Hazel Jones, told us that first day that in three weeks our Japanese teacher of Japanese would arrive, and that we would each introduce ourselves to her in Japanese. The first day everything was explained in English. From the second day everything was in Japanese. After three weeks, Miyagawa Yukie arrived, and became our teacher. That's when we started two-hour tutorials every week. At one tutorial she asked me what I taught at the university, and when she learned that I taught theater history, she asked me if I planned to teach anything about Japanese theater. When I said yes, she volunteered to sing from a Noh text. She also asked if she could attend my classes when I taught about Shakespeare's time, because she was curious about Elizabethan theater and its open stages. So, while I was her student, she became my student. She was very softspoken in person, so when she sang for my class I was unprepared for the power of her voice in full Noh mode. As the end of the school year approached, she announced that there would be no paper test. She had prepared pictures illustrating the traditional story *Tsuru no ongaeshi*, and adapted the story so that all the grammar lessons we had learned were written into the story. Our final project was for each of us to memorize and perform a kamishibai:

“Mukashi, mukashi, aru tokoro ni, ojiisan to obaasan ga sundeimashita. Ojiisan wa mainichi yama ni itte, ki wo utte kurashiteimashita. Aru hi, ojiisan wa yama kara kaerinagara henna oto wo kikimashita. Bata-bata, bata-bata to iu oto deshita …” Basic Japanese, of course, but performing it was a wonderful and very Analog Pleasure.

While I was preparing grades for the end of the school year, I got a letter from my advisor in Detroit. He wrote that if my completed doctoral dissertation was not on his desk by the end of September, I would be thrown out of the program. I said my good-byes to Edmonton, hurried back to America, and wrote, wrote, wrote. It was the policy of Wayne State University that one or two minor typographical errors per page were acceptable, but three or more were not. Such pages had to be re-typed. I wanted to concentrate on writing, not careful typing, so I hired a professional typist. This speeded up the writing process, and I met my deadline. My committee accepted the manuscript, and my defense of the dissertation, and in December 1973 I got my PhD. The next month I began teaching in Newark, New Jersey, replacing a presentation teacher who had just had a baby.

While teaching in Newark, I learned that another campus of Rutgers University wanted to hire someone to teach theater studies. I applied, and had an interview. There were other applicants, so nothing could be officially decided that day, but I had a strong feeling that I would get the offer. Later the same day I drove to the Washington, DC area to visit my father, and was surprised to find a letter waiting for me from Japan. The letter was from Shidehara Michitaro, which surprised me even more. Shidehara and Wilfred Whitehouse had translated Noh plays in the 1930s, and I had written about him in my dissertation. This was my second mysterious experience in connection with Noh. He wrote to say that he had read my dissertation, and that I must further my studies in Japan. He was retired from teaching, and could offer me no job, but he urged me strongly to visit Japan. A week or so later I got a phone call offering me the job at the Camden, New Jersey campus of Rutgers University. Rutgers is one of the famous Ivy League universities, along with Harvard, Yale and Princeton. I sincerely thanked the man for the offer, but said that I had decided to go to Japan to continue studies in my dissertation topic. He was shocked, but said he understood. I was shocked that I had sounded so sure of myself about going to Japan. My father was shocked that I would give up a job offer to follow a dream.

My teaching in Newark finished, and to save money, I moved back to the family home and spent some time every day writing letters to Japanese universities. I went to the library at George Washington University to search for the addresses of universities in Japan. All together I wrote to 40 different universities, sending my CV and copies of recommendations. I got four replies, all from American teachers, and all saying the same thing: on paper your credentials look excellent, but Japanese universities won't hire anyone without a face to face interview. My friend Will Petersen urged me to go to Japan in February. He said that just before the start of the school year there are always teaching jobs available at the last minute. I took courage from his advice, sold my car, got a tourist visa and in February 1975 flew to Haneda Airport on a one-way ticket. I had about \$300; the exchange rate was Yen 300 to the dollar. Tokyo was too big and complicated to me, so I took the train to Kyoto. There was heavy snow at Kyoto Station, and I decided on the spot that I would somehow make that beautiful city my home. All I had to do was find a job. I rented a four and a half mat room in an old house near Shimogamo Shrine. In addition to work, I needed to find a teacher of Noh who would accept a foreigner with minimal Japanese. Will Petersen had urged me to study with Mikata Ken, a Kanze school teacher who also taught Muromachi literature at Doshisha University. I wrote him that I appreciated his advice, but I wanted to study with someone whose performances excited me, not with a scholar. On March 15, I went to Kanze Kaikan in Kyoto to attend recital performances by Noh amateurs. I couldn't read the program, and after a couple of hours of shimai dances, I needed

to stand up and walk around. Then I heard a voice more commanding than any I had heard that day. I watched this man dance, and decided that if he was a teacher and not a student, I wanted to study with him. I hurried to my seat, and asked the man sitting next to me the name of the man who had just finished dancing, the man with the big ears and his hair parted in the middle. He looked at the program and said, "Mikata, Mikata Ken." This was my third mysterious experience in connection with Noh: I had selected the very man my friend had recommended. That settled it as far as I was concerned, but would he accept me? A week later there was to be a recital performance of the Mikata group at the Kawamura Nohgakudo near Doshisha. So, on March 23, I went to see who I hoped would become my fellow students, and to watch Mikata perform again, as well as his wife, his daughter and his two young sons. Near the end of the day, there was a long dance with musicians as well as a chorus, performed by a very tall Englishman named Stephen Gibbs. He urged me to telephone Mikata the next day if I wanted to join the group. So I phoned, went for an interview, and was accepted. I got a list of things to buy: a practice fan, white tabi, the *utai-bon* for the play *Yuya*, and a tape recorder.

In April I began teaching businessmen at various companies in Osaka, one day a week teaching first, second and third-graders English at Seibo gakuen Shogakko in Fushimi, and one day at Otemon Gakuin Daigaku near Takatsukishi. My Noh lessons took a great deal of preparation time in addition to actual lessons, so I was very busy.

In July of that year, on the advice of a friend, I rode my bicycle to Otani Daigaku to introduce myself to Norman Waddell, a scholar and editor of *The Eastern Buddhist*, a journal started by D.T. Suzuki. Norman and I had talked for about an hour when he suddenly asked me if I needed a job, a full time job teaching at a big university. He told me that his boss had played golf the previous week with Prof. Onishi Akio from the English Literature faculty at Kansai University. I had never heard of Kansai University, but he assured me that it was big and good. During the golf game Prof. Onishi had mentioned that they had spent years of effort to get approval to hire a foreigner as a full-time teacher, ideally to teach dramatic literature. Just when the position was approved by the university, the man they wanted to hire had suddenly returned to the US for family reasons. They had a job and no idea how to find a qualified native speaker. The conversation got very lively: "Do you have a suit?" "Yes." "Do you have a resume?" "Yes." "How long will it take you to bicycle home and change into your suit?" "Twenty minutes at most." "I'll telephone Prof. Onishi while you bicycle home and change. Phone me when you are dressed and ready to go to Osaka." Twenty minutes later, I spoke to Prof. Onishi, and he gave me directions to his home in Suita. An hour later, my taxi dropped me off at the Onishi home. Mrs. Onishi opened the door for me, and I introduced myself. While getting my shoes

off, I noticed a doll in a glass case in the entryway, and asked if it was a doll of the *shite* in the Noh *Kakitsubata*? It was, and she asked why I knew about something like that. I had put my resume in the shoulder bag I had used the night before at my *utai* lesson, so I simply pulled out my practice fan. At that moment, Prof. Onishi appeared, took one look at my practice fan, and rushed down the hallway. And then I heard the unmistakable sound of a *nohkan*, the flute used in Noh. We had not yet spoken face to face about teaching, but something told me I would become a teacher at Kandai. This was my fourth mysterious experience in connection with Noh.

I had been hired in a matter of hours at the University of Alberta, but I learned that Kandai doesn't work that way. Week after week I got a phone call from Prof. Onishi that everything would be OK. Finally, in January, six months later, I was able to sign a contract, to begin with the new school year. Over sake, Prof. Onishi told me he was worried about one thing, that students at Kansai University would be so boring to me that I would quickly want to return to America. He urged me to continue to study about Japan, its history, its culture, its language. By making the study of things Japanese a major part of my research, he was hopeful that I would be happy at Kandai. Those of you who know me well, know that I don't always follow advice, but this very perceptive advice I have followed faithfully. And so, on April Fool's day in 1976, I became a teacher at Kansai University. I was thirty-five years old; in March I'll become seventy years old. Good golly Miss Molly! Half my life at Kandai.

## **Part Two: The Kansai University Reality Show**

Bungaku-bu faculty meetings were a shock for me. Three hundred or so teachers checking homework, chatting, drinking tea or sleeping, while at the microphone yet another committee chairman would read a report in a totally flat voice, ending with "*yoroshii deshoo-ka?*" Those of us still awake would mumble "*hai*," and the next committee report was read.

English literature Department meetings were sometimes more lively. At one meeting, Tanaka Shohei, stood up and pointed at me and began talking about something I didn't understand.

I trusted Tanaka-sensei completely, so every time he mentioned my name, or pointed at me I solemnly nodded my head in agreement. This was a case of ignorance is bliss at many levels. As soon as the meeting was over, Tanaka-sensei explained everything to me in his wry, sly English. Until then, the tradition had been that the entrance exam was written during the two months of summer vacation. At last, because I had joined the faculty, Tanaka-sensei and his allies had an excuse to change this policy. He'd said, "Johnson-sensei is appalled to hear that

summer vacation is a time of intensified work for teachers. He's assumed that he would be able to visit his home country during vacation time, but our policy doesn't allow it." I suddenly wished that I'd nodded more strongly to support his comments about me in the meeting, but he assured me that my nodding had been well received, and the following year the entrance exam committee would begin work early in the school year.

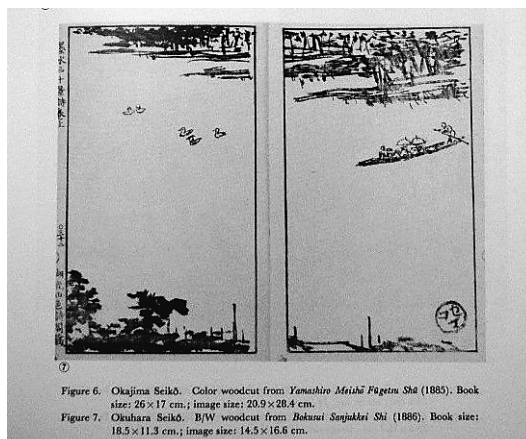
The next year I joined the entrance exam committee as a proofreader, and writer of true/false problems. At that time, each year six people from the thirty or so teachers in the English Literature Department were chosen to prepare the entrance exams. Basically, each Japanese teacher of English was expected to serve on this committee once every five years. But lucky me! I was the seventh member year after year as the only native speaker.

The heavy work of this committee came in February. The six committee members, now seven with me, graded all the tests. Tens of thousands of *wa-yaku* and *eisakubun*, all hand-graded. Later, thanks to Yasukawa Akira, all the English Literature Faculty teachers were required to grade the exams. That meant shorter days and less smoking, both of which I greatly appreciated.

When Yale University announced that the manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa were available for study, I went to Yale the following summer. My habit of correspondence by pen and pencil paid off unexpectedly. This is another Analog Pleasure. By reading the handwriting of many friends and colleagues over the years, I had little trouble deciphering the difficult handwriting of Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound. But in the 1970s it was the policy of the Beinecke Rare Book Library to allow only pencil copies of manuscript materials. No photocopies were permitted, so a trip to Yale each summer became a necessity for the study of Fenollosa manuscripts. Research proceeded slowly.

In the meantime I had joined Kandai's *Tozai-ken*, and was expected to publish my research in Japanese studies. I had known that many, if not most, Edo Period books had been illustrated by woodblock prints, but I had slowly become aware that this tradition had continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In November of 1985, Yasukawa Akira, one of the senior *Tozai-ken* scholars, told me that someone expected to produce an essay for the annual journal of the group was unable to do so. He asked if I could write something of at least twenty-five pages during the Christmas break. I said I could do it if I could include many high-quality illustrations, ideally with some in color. The budget allowed this, and so I wrote an essay on early twentieth century Japanese book illustration. This became my first published article about Japanese art. I sent a copy of this article to an American scholar of Japanese art named Richard Lane. Dick Lane lived at that time in Kyoto, and I hoped for some candid comments and advice. He quickly sent me a post card





Note the katakana seal on the lower right of the artist Okuhara Seiko (1837-1913)

saying, “The pictures are of professional quality.” They were indeed, but I wanted a comment on my essay. A day or so later he telephoned me, and asked me to look at Figure 7. Over the phone he said, “The artist has kindly sealed this picture in katakana: “se-i-ko” , but you wrote her name “se-i-kou” . I was astonished at this mistake until I discovered that Laurance Roberts in his *Dictionary of Japanese Artists* makes the same mistake. So, you believed a man writing in English, and didn’t believe the artist herself. Don’t do that, Scott. Don’t do that.”

I’m still humbled by this wonderful lesson.

In 1990 Yasukawa-sensei asked me to replace him as the Vice-director of the Kokusai Koryu Center, a post he had held for thirteen years. I was happy to be asked. Kawata Teiichi became the Director of the Kokusai Koryu Center, and I became Vice-director. After a short interval, the administrative director became Katsurauma Toshihide, a fluent English speaker with a rather long name.

One of the great analog experiences for students is a homestay in a foreign country. The daily interplay with host family members engages the mind, the body and the emotions. But this very intensity had made Kandai reluctant to officially sponsor homestays. A mismatch can be a painful experience for students and host families. But the University of Adelaide in South Australia had created a good four-week program of English study, carefully selecting reliable host families, and matching them with Kandai students who shared interests in sports or music or nature study. So we decided to try it, and the pioneer spirit of the first group of students going to Australia made it very successful. Except for one thing: Our students didn’t know much about Japan. Or if they did, they had trouble explaining in English. In other words, they

thought about Australia, or the UK or America in English, but they thought about Japan in Japanese. In the years since, students have told me repeatedly that learning to talk about Japan in other languages has helped them in numerous ways.

The initiation of the dual degree program between Kandai and Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, further intensified the need for deeper communication among international students and at every level of teaching and administration of our two universities. English language classes on many aspects of Japanese business and culture were initially created specifically for Webster students, but are now enjoyed by international students from many countries, and from Kandai students as classes in English for special purposes.

As Kandai slowly expanded its international classes, and improved its dormitory facilities, there was a push in a different but complementary direction. Under the leadership of Prof. Oda Minoru, a completely new approach to foreign language teaching was proposed. A committee was created to plan the creation of a new department at Kandai devoted to the study of foreign languages.

Kandai students wanted more sophisticated and varied foreign language experiences on our campus. At the same time, increasing numbers of junior and senior high school teachers of foreign languages wanted to learn new techniques of teaching and evaluating progress in foreign language education. A new faculty was born, and I am pleased and proud to have been associated with its birth, and to have been a pioneer faculty member. And now, rather to my surprise, to accept with mixed feelings the status of emeritus professor. The image of the elderly in Japanese culture hinges on stoop-backed helplessness. Although I still champion the importance of analog experience as a desired prelude to digital life, I assure you that I have every expectation — as a veteran analog person — to pursue the full benefits of digital life.

Here's one way the supposed elderly triumph in a digital age. My granddaughter turned one year old in January. She watches closely as her mother Skypes my wife and me. Parent & child chat about this and that, while Mia-chan watches actions. While chatting, Mia's grandma does *gu-pa!* And grand-daughter does *gu-pa!* Grandpa does *gu-choki!* And Mia-chan laughs in surprise. Weeks later, Mia-chan watches and listens to her mama and her mama's mama sleepily. Grandpa shows his face on Skype, and Mia-chan does *gu-choki!* In case grandpa didn't catch this important "hello", she does it again. The importance isn't analog VS digital. The importance is the impulse to communicate.

Kandai has changed in 35 years; I have changed in 35 years; I hope both of us continue to move in newer and better directions.

Scott Johnson, emeritus professor, January 15, 2011.