



'March to the Scaffold'

I wrote a couple of weeks ago about attending my daughter Fumi's graduation ceremony at the same university I briefly attended when I was younger. After the ceremony, as we walked away from the convocation hall strolling happily along towards the bus stop, our route took us past the same building in which some of my classes had been held back in 1969. My father and I had made a visit to this same building together one day back then, but it was far from a 'happy stroll' on that occasion!

As I mentioned in the previous story, my university life had started enthusiastically. I don't clearly remember how the decision for me to attend university had been arrived at; it seems to have been something that was just assumed in our family. My parents had been forced to leave school at a very early age, so of course they were eager to have their own children become as 'well-educated' as possible. Canadian students at that time made a choice between an 'Academic' or a 'Technical/Vocational' stream when they entered high school, and without question, I went into the academic stream, which carried the implication that I would move directly into university after high school.

So when the time came, off I went. During the course of my high school years, I had become interested in music, specifically playing the flute, so it was this that I chose as my major field of study. Before classes began, I was quite excited about the whole thing; at last I would be able to spend all day every day involved with playing my flute! But once the first term got under way, I realized that the reality was going to be different. Flute playing was only a very small part of what I was expected to do, as compulsory courses for all music students included theory and harmony classes, music history classes, piano lessons (piano lessons!), and even courses outside of the music faculty, including English and History of Art.

It was just like being back in grade school! I had a timetable full of these classes, and at 8:30 in the morning a couple of times a week, found myself sitting in a desk in rows with other students, listening to a teacher talking about English Literature. Yuck!

It didn't take long before I started skipping classes here and there, and by the end of the term, I had long abandoned both the English and Art courses, with the inevitable result that when the end-of-year grades were published, and I had to present them to my parents, I had a real problem. My father in particular wanted to know what was going on, and I behaved very childishly, and tried to bluff my way out of it with some kind of story about an 'unfair teacher', or some such silly idea.

My father - I am sure - could see right through this story, but pushed me further, "Well then, if you've been treated unfairly, let's go over there and set it right," and we got in his car and headed off towards the university together.

What a horrible ride that was! I sat there in the car, dreading our arrival at the school and the subsequent discussion with the professor. I knew that he would simply pull out the records showing my non-attendance and my incomplete course work, and that would be the end of it for me. If I had been a bit more mature, I could have confessed everything to my father and avoided this horrible journey, but I was incapable of that. I could only sit there, awaiting my inevitable fate.

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>

As it happened, I was saved from the worst. It turned out that the professor was away from the school for the summer, and there was no dramatic 'showdown'. But the end result was the same; my father ended his support for my post-secondary education, and I did not return to the university the next year. I became a drop-out.

As our family group walked past that same building a couple of weeks ago, I reminded Dad of those events, but he professed not to remember that episode. Fumi just asked, "Dad, why didn't you just go to class; it can't have been difficult work," but I had no answer for her.

What's that expression? "Too soon old, too late smart!"

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>