



# A Story a Week ...

... from woodblock printmaker David Bull

## Birthday Girl

It's 'Birthday Sunday' again here on Story A Week, the first one we've had in quite a while. Sometimes I remember family birthdays; sometimes I don't. With 'in-laws' multiplying in recent years, it has become more difficult to keep track of everything. But at least I (usually) remember the birthdays of my own kids, and today it's one of those - daughter Fumi this time. She's actually getting more than her fair share of attention - after all, she was featured in one of these stories just last year, on the occasion of her university graduation - but she has got her fingers into so many pies these days that she should be writing her own Story A Week to tell us about everything!

Back in the days when we were 'expecting' Fumi, we learned the gender of the baby as part of the general medical testing on her mother, and I - for one - was terrifically pleased when I heard that we had another girl on the way. Although I basically didn't care at first whether we had boys or girls, once we had one child I really hoped that the next would be the same. (I was thinking back to the days when my brother and I had been inseparable partners, and the pleasures we had playing together.) My thoughts on this were quite prescient, and early life for these two girls turned out the same - an endless round of pleasurable play together.

She's now 24, and when I think back to my own 'middle twenties', I remember that they were a bit of a confusing time for me, when I struggled to find direction in my life. Fumi also struggles, although for her, it is not a problem of finding 'something to do', but of trying to fit everything she wants to get done into the framework of a 24 hour day! She seems to have a good grasp of something that I myself am still wrestling with - the way to create a good balance between work and play. We are communicating quite regularly these days via email and computer telephone, and I will typically hear that even in the middle of a busy time for her business, she will also be working long hours at a restaurant job she holds down, will still take the time to visit her grandparents for a weekly family meal, and then on top of all this will somehow find time for a snowboarding trip with a gang of her friends. Now I know that people of her age have a lot more energy than an old guy like me, but this seems ridiculous! It's not just raw energy; it's a better sense of how to organize and enjoy one's life than I seem to have.

But that's how life is supposed to go, isn't it - we expect our children to be an 'improvement' over ourselves, to be better educated, and generally more successful. These days though, our newspapers are full of gloomy economic news, and one might think that young people these days are faced with a difficult handicap just as they are starting out. How can they be expected to 'climb higher' when starting from such a difficult point?

Well, it seems that Fumi doesn't waste any time reading that kind of negative news. A moment ago I mentioned 'her business', and should explain. She and her sister are now back 'together again' after years of following different interests and different paths - Himi becoming a wife and mother; Fumi taking a university degree in commerce - and the two of them have set up a business making fashion accessories. This is a hugely competitive market, but early results have been very promising, and many customers are finding their products unique and interesting. It is quite possible that they are on the way to creating a famous brand!

So perhaps that's the future for Fumi: dropping by now and then to visit her Dad on one of her trips to visit her Ginza branch store! Wouldn't that be fun! I wonder if they would be willing to make some space in one corner for a little display of some old-fashioned woodblock prints ...?

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