



Man of the World

I was hoping that July 1st would fall on a Sunday this year, so that I could make it an 'anniversary' Story A Week, but as the calendar hasn't cooperated, we'll have to have the story a little bit on the early side ... (Or maybe you can put off reading this one until the 1st rolls around!)

It is indeed a rather big anniversary this time, one that leaves me almost shaking my head in incredulity. July 1st will mark 25 years since I emigrated to Japan. A quarter of a century.

'Emigration' of course wasn't the word I used back in that summer of 1986. Although our family had hoped that we would be allowed to stay for 'a while', the reality was that we were just visiting - a situation made clear by the stamp on the Entry Card that was clipped to my passport that day: Status 4-1-4 (tourist) 90 days.

Well, one thing led to another, as these things do, and the initial three months became extended by three more months, then six months, and then another six months, etc. etc., things stretching out bit by bit until one day in the spring of 1993 I made what was to be the last trip to the immigration office, where I received the 'Permanent Residence' stamp.

And now twenty-five years have passed, so if this isn't 'emigration', then I don't know what is! It's a bit funny, because this is of course the second time in my life that I have emigrated. When I was five years old, our family left Britain, where we had all been born, and moved permanently to Canada. A few years later, after a transition period as 'landed immigrants', we became Canadian citizens. As it happens, both Canada and Britain allow dual-nationality, so I am not only Canadian, but remain a full British Citizen, a status which allows me to live and work in any of the EU countries, should I choose.

It's actually quite a surreal thought, that - anytime I chose to, I could simply pack everything up, put some money in my pocket, head for Narita airport, jump on a flight to any one of a few dozen countries, look for a place to rent, and start a completely new life ... What an embarrassment of possibilities!

It seems pretty clear though, that I will be doing no such thing. I'm pretty well settled here in Japan, and haven't the slightest intention of going anywhere.

Whenever this topic comes up in discussions with friends here, I am usually asked if I will take the 'next step' and apply for Japanese citizenship. Although the requirements for this are not clearly published by the government, it does seem that I easily qualify, and if I were to make the application, it would almost certainly be granted.

But given that Japan does *not* permit dual nationality (for adults such as myself), and the fact that my Permanent Residence status allows me pretty much complete participation in society here (barring the holding of public office, and voting rights), there really is very little incentive for me to take that step.

It would be nothing more than symbolic, and I think that as far as the symbols go, I would rather hang on to my current 'Mr. Cosmopolitan Citizen of the World' status.

Yes, I can see my future, once I become just a 'little bit' more successful in my work - jetting around every few months between my apartment in London, my ranch in Canada, the palazzo on the Riviera ... and maybe also a nice villa in Karuizawa.

Well ... my *passports* are ready!

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