



Time to Leave

The other day I was working at my bench, and also in the workshop were a couple of the ladies who are training here as printers. It was late in the afternoon, getting near time to pack up work for the day, and I pointed this out to them, but did so in a bit of a silly way. I tried to put on a deep 'radio announcer' voice, and said out loud to the room, "*Soro soro, o-wakare no jikoku ga chikazuite mairimashita ...*".

I then turned around to face them, expecting to see smiles of recognition. I got instead, blank stares. It seems that my 'impression' had been so poor that the reference was unrecognizable. I then asked them about it, "Don't you recognize that phrase, or that voice?" but still drew nothing but a blank. And I realized that yet once again, I had demonstrated to them just how old I was, and how wide a gap there is between their knowledge of general culture and mine.

These two ladies are 28 and 40 years old, and the distance between them and me (I am 61) sometimes seems to be very wide indeed. The phrase with which I tried to tell them "It's almost time to go," was one used every weeknight by the radio announcer Tatsuya Jo at the close of the long-running late-night music program Jetstream. To me it is totally familiar, and it is difficult to understand how somebody wouldn't know it. After all, Jo-san hosted that very popular program for more than 25 years! *Everybody* knows his voice, and his catch phrases ... don't they?

Later that evening, after they had left, I did a bit of research, and learned just why they had not known about him. I myself have an impression of his program as being something that was on the air until just recently, but I found out that it has actually been 19 years since his voice was last heard on the airwaves. No wonder they had no idea what I was talking about!

Back in the early 1990s, I was living together with my daughters as a three-person family. After the girls went to sleep every night, I went to my workbench in the next room, and worked on my woodcarving until late. There was of course no internet in those days, and the FM radio was a constant 'companion'. It would be an exaggeration to claim that I listened to Jetstream every night, but I was certainly one of the program's regular fans.

It was sponsored by JAL, and used the 'easy listening' format to conjure up for the listeners a general mood of Romantic Travel. A selection of music based on (say) French melodies would be followed by a JAL advertisement for tours to that country. I think that especially in the early days of the program, back in the 1970s, it played a very influential part in getting the Japanese populace to think of international air travel as being something that they could actually do themselves.

Jo-san's deep and rich voice - he was *born* to be a radio announcer, surely - carried us all along on the nightly journey to destinations around the world, only bringing us back to earth again with that phrase letting us know that it was nearly time to leave.

He made his final broadcast on December 30th of 1994, when he told us that he would not be returning as host when the program started up again in the new year, and - for the first time ever in the long history of the program - signed off using the word 'sayonara'.

Less than two months later, he was gone, dead of esophageal cancer.

But we still remember him, and his wonderful voice, as though it were yesterday ... at least, *some* of us do!

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