

# The story of Peter Currie

Shoichi Kaneko

Peter came to Japan from Canada in 1973 as an English teacher.

This was just after the Tokyo Olympic Games with so many Japanese English learners at that time and some unable to distinguish between the countries of Canada or America. At that time saying “GAIJIN” was synonymous with “English Speaker”. On the train or on the street corner there was a place to see Japanese people making a rush to see a GAIJIN and maybe trying to practice English. The sense at that time was “English is Everywhere!”.

There were many English teachers at the time trying to understand being called “GAIJIN” and trying to bond and form an understanding of the Japanese people at the time.

Peter started at a small English school in Tokyo, not unlike the story in the famous Natsume Soseki novel “Botchan” where the teacher is teaching in the small town of Matsuyama in Shikoku. The novel is about the funny and strange life of a city boy living in the foreign world of the slow “barbaric” country side. Like the Botchan story, Peter was trying hard to enjoy the gap with jokes and silly stories but sometimes things were just too much and, over the long day, he felt like he needed to drink something more. In the evenings he returned to his true love of drinking Scotch Whiskey. In the world of English teachers he was thought to be a “Stubborn Teacher” the likes of Arthur Chipping in the novel “Goodbye, Mr. Chips”.

The day Peter came to Japan he had stayed in my home for 6 months. Being an admirer of Louis Armstrong, there were many large pictures and record covers displayed in my home. But Peter had felt that Shakespeare’s plot is so much more important!

The drink was Scotch, the music was Bob Dylan and the English was Shakespeare. In that time I could connect and come together to support and understand that “Stubborn Teacher”.

At the small English Language School that Peter taught at he was asked to be a leader of Rhythm Training or Repetition Training. As often used in Japan for learning music or sports or language. It is the idea of muscle training and repeating the action which trains the muscles in the movement. Repeating Mother Goose or other basic sentences in a chorus style training. It is a common idea in learning multiplication tables in Japan.

These types of fundamental training methods are not always popular for native English teachers but in his case Peter chose to use them and became a kind of “Rare Teacher” in Japan. Later on he also contributed to the adult businessman’s English communication as well in Nikkei Newspaper and Yazaki Corporation.

In December of 2013, Peter Currie passed away and while there was not any church music or the usual Buddhist monk to read the mantras at the his goodbye ceremony in Japan, the music of Bob Dylan was there. When thinking about the original pioneers of Rhythm Training we must always come back and remember Peter.

