



Remembering My Father

By Reiko Takasaka Lee (高坂玲子)

My father, Tomotake Takasaka (高坂知武), was born in Yamagata City (山形市) in northern Japan. He lost both of his parents at a tender age of ten and had to travel by himself to Ohmuta (大牟田) in the southernmost island of Kyushu (九州) to live with a relative family. There he attended a middle school, then No. 7 National High School (第七高等學校) in Kagoshima (鹿児島), and then went on to the Imperial Kyushu University (帝國九州大學), majoring in agricultural machinery (農業機械). After graduation, he worked in a couple of Agricultural Experimental Stations (農業試驗所). During his employment at the Kanazawa (金澤) Experimental Station located near the Sea of Japan,

my parents lost their first-born son to pneumonia, which probably contributed heavily to his decision to move to warm Taiwan. He became an Assistant Professor (助教授) in the Department of Agricultural Engineering (農業土木科) in the Imperial Taihoku University (帝國臺北大學), which became

National Taiwan University after the World War II. When the university was turned over to the KMT government, a fair number of Japanese professors were asked to stay on to teach. As the number of Japanese dwindled and they could no longer maintain schools for Japanese children, my father finally contemplated of leaving Taiwan. However, the department chairman (金城主任) and a number of students came to our house to plead for him to stay on. He was moved and agreed on a condition that I was to be enrolled in a local high school. As it turned out, he remained in Taiwan all together for half a century.

Musically, he had an interesting background. His mother was a teacher in a public school, which was quite rare in

Japan at the dawn of the 20th century (the Meiji 明治 period). On top of that, she somehow got hold of a violin and tinkered with it. His strong interest in western music seemed to have developed in his early teens. He taught himself to play organ (harmonium) and violin. He told me that during his



■ 高坂玲子 7 歲時與父母親合影，她坐在鋼琴前，當時還不會彈。（提供／高坂玲子）



middle school days he had to practice his violin in an “oshi-ire (押入)” (something akin to a walk-in closet, in which you have to stoop down) with his violin muffled by wrapping a towel around strings, because the head of the house where he lived held a dim view of western music. When he started to teach me violin after the war, this story made me uncomfortable and feel ashamed, since my musical environment was so blessed compared to his, yet I was not particularly diligent in practicing. A hallmark of his music making is breath of the instruments he played, which included all the string instruments from violin to double base. Essentially he was filling in whatever the instrument needed in the school ensembles and orchestras in his high school and college days.


I don't know much about his musical activities after he came to Taiwan, but his musical activities started almost as soon as the World War II ended. It started with his teaching violin to a few youngsters in our neighborhood, plus all sorts of group playing in our house. But his favorite activity was a weekly string quartet playing, which was sustained throughout my high school and collage years, although members of quartet changed from time to time. I must say I admired my mother for putting up with all that noise (often it was more of a noise than a melodious music), and always graciously treating the participants

with drinks and snacks. Our quartet group was often called upon to perform in public, including performances in the concert hall of NTU Medical School. It was at these gatherings of music making that I met my future husband, (李遠川). It appears that my father maintained his vigorous involvement in music after I left Taiwan for America in 1957, especially in the area of organization of the NTU orchestra. Naturally he was helped by many dedicated and musically talented students, including my husband's younger sister and brother.

My father's involvement in music was not limited to actual musical performances. For some time after the war, he spent considerable amount of time hand-copying sheet music, which was in a short supply in those days. My father was also a very handy man in making and repairing things. As a child, he opened up an expensive (at that time) clock to try to figure out how it worked. Of course he could not put it back together, but his mother never scolded him for his act. He developed his own way of repairing string and other instruments and re-hairing the bows, sometimes making tools just for the purpose of repairing. He even acquired the skill of piano tuning.

As much as he was involved in the development of my violin playing, he was totally hands-off when it came to

my school work. I don't remember him ever pushing me to do homework or telling me to excel in school. Perhaps he would have gotten involved if my grade started to slip, but fortunately I was more or less steady in my school work.

I think that my father was a very unique person with many talents, but most of all he was a very generous and unselfish man. 



■ 高坂玲子大學時，與父親高坂教授（左後方）的弦樂四重奏，右後方為筆者未來的先生李遠川院士，右前方為江有龍，本校植物系教授退休。（提供／高坂玲子）