## おかがき覗き見

国際交流員の目から見た岡垣

平成28年3月1日 第2号 岡垣町自治区長会会長編

## 岡垣町自治区長会会長:橋村魁氏インタビュー

OKAGAKI'S CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL COUNCIL: An Interview with Yasushi Hashimura

村会長の第一印象は愛想のいい、精力的な人。インタ

ビューのために会う時に、会長 は原さん(自治区長会担当職員) がカメラを手に取っていることに



気付く。原さんはこの記事のため にインタビュー中、会長の写真を 撮らせてもらうと説明したら、

「二枚目に撮ってね」 と会長が明るく冗談を言う。

インタビューの間中、会長は常に笑顔で対応してくれた。しかし、 岡垣町や現在の自治会のあり方に ついて聞かれると、会長は自分の 考えをためらいなく、明確でまじ めに語る。

自治会の英訳は「neighbour-hood association」だが、私の知る限り、英語圏での自治会らしき

団体は日本の自治会とは全く違う。日本のどんな町にも存在する自治会は、自治区のために広範囲にわたる活動をしている――町美化活動や清掃、防犯パトロールや防災訓練、運動会や祭り。私のアパートの前の街灯だって自治会が取り付けてくれたものだということを知って驚いた。岡垣町には自治区が55区あり、その55区の区長たちは岡垣町自治区長会を構成する。そして去年、橋村会長はその代表者の集まりの責任を担うリーダーとして選ばれた。

n first meeting,
Chairman Hashimura
strikes me as a genial
and energetic man.
When we meet for the interview, the
Chairman notices Hara-san setting up
the camera. Hara-san explains that
he'll be taking photos throughout the
interview for the article, in response
to which the Chairman jokes:

"Make sure I look handsome!"

Throughout the interview, the Chairman's laughter is not infrequent. But when asked about Okagaki and the state of today's jichikai, he expresses his thoughts with enthusiasm and clarity, and without hesitation.

Jichikai roughly translates to 'neighbourhood association' in English, but no neighbourhood associations I've ever heard of come close to matching



them. They're present in virtually every neighbourhood in Japan, and each conducts a vast range of activities for the benefit of their communities: local rubbish management and cleaning; safety patrols and disaster drills; festivals and sports events. Even the street lights outside my own apartment were only installed because of the work of my local jichikai. There

are fifty-five in Okagaki alone, and their presidents form Okagaki's Neighbourhood Council. And, as of last year, Chairman Hashimura has been tasked with leading and taking responsibility for this group of local representatives.

What with his duties as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Council and President of the Asahi-Minami jichikai,



平成26年 旭南区での救命訓練の様子

岡垣町自治区長会会長と旭南区長兼務の上に、社会福祉法人局会の理事長を本業とする橋村会長は非常に忙しい。暇な時ぐらいはゆっくりしているだろう―と思うところだが、会長は気力には底がないようだ。趣味は運動だと言う。毎朝5時に起きて筋トレをして、ランニングも定期的にしている。

自分の忙しい生活について、「もちろん大変ですよ」と会長が認める。しかし、その方が良いらしい。「 忙しければ忙しいだけに、人間というのは知恵出すん

ですよ」と会長。「短い時間で処理できるようになるとか。…生産性を上げるんですよ」

マ会長の出身は、 愛着はあるが交通 が少しだけ不便だ

った久留米――「笑っちゃいかん」

と会長が笑いながら言う――だったが、30年前に、 家族と仕事を考慮に入れ、引っ越すことにした。当時はJR九州に勤めていて、仕事で北九州市と福岡市を 行き来しなければならなかった。両市の間に位置して 、土地代も安かった岡垣町が最適だった。

引っ越してきた際、会長は自治会に入ったが、最初 はあまり参加しなかった。 10年前までの会長は、仕 事ばっかりのサラリーマンだったのだ。

「土曜日は殆ど休まないと」と会長。「家の帰りは 、飯食って、寝るだけ。朝は仕事に」

しかし、会社の仕事をやめて今の理事長の仕事に就 くことにした頃、会長はあることに気づいた。

「世の中何も知らんな、例えば岡垣のこと全然知ららんなということですよ」と会長。「仕事ばっかりで。…住所置いているだけだからさ。岡垣町の役場どこ

and his full-time job as Director of a Social Welfare Corporation, the Chairman is an incredibly busy man. One would think that he would at least use his free time to relax, but the Chairman seems to have boundless stores of energy. His hobby, he says, is exercising. He wakes up at 5am every morning for physical training, and he goes running on a regular basis.

"Of course it's tough," the Chairman says of his busy schedule. But apparently he prefers things that way. "It's when we're really busy that we use our brains," the Chairman explains. "We learn to complete tasks in a shorter space of time; things like that. It increases productivity."

he Chairman was born in Kurume, which is dear to him but which was slightly inconvenient in terms of public transport – "Don't laugh!" he says, laughing himself – and, thirty years ago, thinking of his family and his job, he decided to move to a new home. At the time, he was working for Japan Railways, and had to go to Kitakyushu City and Fukuoka City for work. Since Okagaki is right between both of these city centres and its land prices were low, it was perfect for his needs.

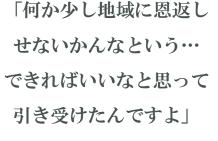
The Chairman joined his local jichikai when he moved

here, but wasn't particularly involved in jichikai work for quite a while. Until ten years ago, the Chairman explains, he was a 'salaryman', who did nothing but work.

"I hardly ever took Saturdays off," he says. "I'd go home to eat and sleep, that was it. And back to work in the morning."

But one day, around the time he

was about to quit his company job for his current job at the nursing home, the Chairman came to a realisation.





訓練の後にカレーで皆笑顔!

にあるんかなという(笑)…本当そんな感じですよ」 なので、地域の人に自治会の区長になってくれるか と聞かれたら、会長はその責任を受け取った。

しかし区長の仕事は簡単ではない。先ず自治会のメンバーの、自治会のするべき活動や資金の使途に関する様々な意見を聞いて、調整してまとめなければならない。各区長が代表する自治区に特有な住民たちや問題が違う自治区長会に関しても同じ。

橋村会長によると、その鍵となるのは、聞く力だ。 「もちろんこう、皆さんを引っ張っていくというリ ーダーシップも要るんやけどもそのリーダーシップの 前には、ちゃんと、皆さんの声を聞いておくというの

が一番大事だと思うん ですけどね」

「これは難しいんよ 。コミュニケーション づくりをせないかんと か言うやない。コミュ ニケーションづくりと いうのは何かというと

相手を納得させないかんとかいう風に勘違いしている 人も、多いか分からんけど、本当はやっぱり、聞く力 よね。それが一番大事だと思うんですよ」

> 治会は日本の町の根本的な部分だとはい え、現在は一つの難問題に逢着している ——加入率。

「自治会でいうのは元々ほら、皆さんとコミュニケーションを色々分かったりとか、祭りごとなど色んなことをやっていくことなんですけどね、それがどんどんやっぱこう、気薄になってきてる。…地域のそういうつながりがどんどん薄くなってきているんですよ」と会長。「区に入りたくないという方もいますよ。区に入っても何もメリットもないとか」

「民主主義の一番古い 形かな。…一番身近な 形の民主主義です」 だが自治会に入って地域の活動に参加することはとても重要なことだと会長が断言する。投票率が特に低い日本の選挙に例えたら、皆が投票しないんだ

ったら投票された人は本当に皆の代表か、ということ になる。 "I realised I didn't know anything about the world – I didn't even know anything about Okagaki," he says. "I'd been so busy with work. ... I only really had an address here.

It was at the level where I didn't even really know where the town hall was," he

says, laughing.

「ちゃんと、皆さんの声を聞いておくと言うのが一番大事 だと思うんですけどね」

So when he was asked by someone in the area if he would become president of their local jichikai, the Chairman said yes.

"I felt like I had to give something back to the neighbourhood," he says.

But the job of a jichikai president is not an easy one. To begin with, he has to mediate between all the different members of the jichikai, and help everyone

come to an agreement on how to best spend jichikai resources and efforts. This goes for the Neighbourhood Council, too, where each neighbourhood represented by each President has their own unique residents and problems.

The key, the Chairman says, is learning to listen.

"Of course leadership is also essential, to be able to pull everyone along with you. But what's most important is listening to what everyone has to say.

"That's difficult. They say building communication skills is important, right? But as to what that is... I think maybe a lot of people misinterpret communication skills as having to satisfy the other person, but really it's the ability to listen. I think that's what's most important."

Ithough jichikai are a fundamental part of Japanese suburban and rural life, these days there's one particularly problem they all face: numbers.

"Jichikai were originally about, you know, communicating with everyone and setting up festivals and things like that. But that's getting more and more challenging. ... Those sorts of local connections are getting thinner and thinner," the Chairman says. "There are people who don't want to join at all. They say there's no merit in it."

But joining the jichikai and taking part in neighbourhood life, the Chairman says, is incredibly important. He compares it to elections, the voting rates of which are particularly low in 自治会はもちろん政府機関のくくりには入らないが、 日本社会の一番最小の単位が自治区。「民主主義の一

番古い形かな」と会長が笑って言う。「一番身近な形 の民主主義です」

「皆さんの地縁の輪というのはですね、区の行事への参加者が多いほど良くなっていくと私は思うんよね。…私はね、参加者が100%だったら… それが一番大事だと思う、参加



平成24年 旭南区での消火訓練の様子

者を増やすことよ。…だから何でも参加者ですよ」

会長に自治会の加入率を上げるには何が必要か、そして自治会のこれからに関するビジョンは何かと聞いたら、会長はこう語る。「自治会は変わらんといかんと思うんすよ。…新しい風をいれんと。…若い人たちが入ってきて、そしてその人達がずっとこう、ずっと繋がって行ってね。良いところはそのまま残す、でも今の時代に合ったね、町づくりというか…

新しく変えていくと、新しい波に変えていくとかいうようなことをやっていかんとね、生き残っていかれんやないかなと思う」



▶ ンタビューの中ほどに、会長が私にオーストラリアに自治会はあるかと聞く。ないですね、と私が答える。

「ない…」と会長。「まあ…

私よくやってみて、いい制度かなという風に思います よ。だって、本気になればね、本当にやりがいのある 仕事だと思います」

やりがいを感じさせることは何かと聞いたら、会長 の答えはいたって簡単。

「住民の方々が喜んでくれるやないですか。…の笑 顔ですよ」と会長が笑う。「それが励みですよ」 Japan. If not everyone votes, the Chairman asks, then can you really call the elected person a representative of the

people? And while jichikai are not government bodies, they are the smallest unit of Japanese society. "I guess you could call it the oldest form of democracy," he says with a laugh. "The closest, most immediate form.

"I think when it comes to things like local connections, the more jichikai participants there are, the better they get," he

says. "I think, if we could get 100% of neighbourhood residents to join... I think that's the most important thing for jichikai, raising numbers. ... It's all about the participants."

When I ask the Chairman what he thinks needs to be done to increase the number of jichikai participants – what, indeed, his vision for the future of jichikai is – he says, "I think we need to change. ... Jichikai need a new wind... We need younger people to join, and connect jichikai on to future generations. We need to keep the good parts, but build communities in step with the times... If we don't do things to change, to create a new wave within jichikai, then I don't think jichikai will survive."

idway through the interview, the Chairman asks me if there's anything like jichikai in Australia. I reply that, for the most part, there isn't.

"I see," says the Chairman. "Personally, having worked in jichikai for as long as I have, I think the jichikai system is a good one. If you do things properly, you find that helping out in jichikai really is a worthwhile job."

I ask him what he personally feels makes the job worthwhile. The Chairman's response is simple.

"When you make people happy. ... Their smiles." He laughs. "That keeps you going."

## 国際交流員とは

初めまして、岡垣町役場で国際交流員として勤めているステファニー・チャンです。生まれ育ちはオーストラリアのメルボルンで、今は岡垣町で国際交流の事業に励んでいます。岡垣町の住民についてもっと知りたい、そして岡垣町の魅力を英語圏の人達にも伝えたいという思いでこの英語と日本語のニュースレターを始めました。よろしくお願いします!

## What is a CIR?

Nice to meet you! I'm Stephanie Chan, Okagaki Town Hall's CIR, or Coordinator of International Relations. I was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia, and am currently working on projects to encourage international exchange in Okagaki. I started this newsletter, *OKAGAKI NOZOKIMI*, in the hopes of learning more about the residents of Okagaki, and of providing English speakers with a way to learn about Okagaki's appeal. I'll be in your care!