

Kazufumi Watanabe

~How Nishiura was revitalized~



Masami Kaji

Shotaro Honda

Kazufumi Watanabe's career

His career began as a public staff in 1988, after graduating from Dokkyo University. He entered Fuji Yoshida City Hall. His first assignment destination was the “Commerce and Tourism Department”, and it was the first time for him to work related to Mt. Fuji.

Then, he moved to the secretarial department in 2002. At just the same year, Fujiyoshida City became a campsite for Cameroon representatives of football when World Cup was held in Japan.



Two years later, he was assigned to Mt. Fuji Section, and he also became an International Conference Coordinator. Surprisingly, he experienced visiting U.S. Department of State as part of his duties during this period. These are his main background.

Looking next at his current job, in 2022, he joined “富士吉田市外二カ村恩賜” Prefectural Property Protection Association, and there, he has been managing Kita-Fuji Training Area and mountain lodges for forest conservation.

In a part of his duties, he is currently working hard to negotiate with the “Ministry of Defense” for an agreement to decide how to take advantage of Kita-Fuji Training Area, being supposed to be renewed in April. He believes Kita-Fuji Training Area is very important for Fujiyoshida City because the Kita-Fuji Training Area occupies approximately one-third of the area of Fujiyoshida City.

He also said that what actions I will take is the key to rejuvenating Fujiyoshida City in the future.

About “Nishiura area”



“Fuji Yoshida area” is divided into two parts, “Kamiyoshida ” and “ Shimoyoshida ”, and “Shimoyoshida” includes “Nishiura area”.

Focusing first on the old “Shimoyoshida area”. This area was initially known for the textile industry and called “Hometown of Silk and Mt. Fuji”. There were a number of workers and

brokers engaging in this industry. Accordingly, Nishiura area prospered as a drinking district at night among them.

However, the situation has completely changed because of the motorization. “Fuji Subaru line” was opened, and most people gradually stopped passing through the town at the foot of the mountain. What was worse, the prevalence of cheap Chinese products and “Oil Shock” were getting textile industry and drinking district worse. The result was that “Shimoyoshida area” became like a ghost town.

Having said that, there are plenty of important meanings left in “Shimoyoshida area” and “Nishiura area”. Especially, in terms of history. So, Mr. Watanabe told us the historical importance of “Shimoyoshida area”.

One remarkable point is that this area was almost dominated by the American military after WW II between 1945 and 1958. Considering this, drinking district thrived in Nishiura area again for American soldiers. Now, almost all of us know that US military station in Okinawa Prefecture, but we don’t know too much about the fact that they previously stationed in “Nishiura area”.

From this perspective, it could be said that “Nishiura area” has important meanings with regards to the relationship between Japan and America. That’s the major reason why Mr. Watanabe and his coworkers try hard to rejuvenate this area.

How to activate “Nishiura area”



According to Mr. Watanabe, there are three main strategies to activate this area. First thing is to appeal Mt. Fuji more. This is the once viral picture in Instagram taken by Mr. Watanabe in front of Mt. Fuji at Nishiura area. Mr. Watanabe used to guide tourists while showing attractions of Mt. Fuji.

Another important thing is to regain the identity of “Shimoyoshida and Nishiura area” by using the old alley. For example, “Hataorimachi Festival” and “Silk Festival” kind of festivals reminiscent of the past were held in the area recently.

Third point is to take advantage of this antique landscapes. So far, many movies were taken in Fujiyoshida area, such as “Tokiwoakerusyoujo”, “Santyoumenoyuui”, and “Yureru”.

In addition, “Shimoyoshida area” started having a tie-up with “Keio university” and started regional revitalization project by offering workshops and study tours. According to Mr. Watanabe, “Newcomers from outside named “地域おこし協力隊” are suggesting brand-new ideas and actions”.

For instance, they have been acting as a bridge between “Fujiyoshida area” and new settlers. Also, this is the poster of new design promotion project by them. And, this is the event conducted by a youth team to send the attractive points of Fujiyoshida.



His beliefs and passion

Lastly, I asked him a principle of his job. He answered, the theme of his life is “つながる、つづける、つなげる”. In English, “ Be connected, continue, connect.” He believes it is highly important to interact with as many people as possible.

Based on his belief, he always tries to accept any favorable suggestions from others no matter how he is busy, and work together on it. He supposes having conversations and interactions with a lot of people will be responsible for new relationships and new ways of thinking, and consequently, it will lead to the revitalization of Fujiyoshida area, he emphasized.

On top of that, when it comes to his motivation toward his job, he also stated that the passion for Fujiyoshida and Nishiura area is essential to his work. This is the reason why he has been working on this job with a great motivation. He loves Fujiyoshida area so much that grappling with not only his main duty, but also various activities like creating cafes to watch movies by using vacant houses in Fujiyoshida City.

Finally, I'd like to share a meaningful message for students from him. He was like “you should definitely interact with many people regardless of nationality, gender, background, and so on”. This kind of experiences will allow you to broaden your horizons. So, you should experience a lot during the period of school days. I want to keep the message in mind.

