



MINATO TOKYO

# Bulletin

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MINATO UNESCO ASSOCIATION NEWS & CALENDAR

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## Those Days, These Days

Gunji Shimizu, Director, Minato UNESCO Association

I met an accordion back in 1952 when I entered a university. I was fascinated by the beautiful sound of the instrument, and started to teach myself until I mastered it. For 60 years since then, I have not been able to be a professional player till today.

In those days, when neon started to glitter, I played popular songs accepting drunken people's request in a small pub in Ginza. I remember a beautiful bar hostess who gave me, in the back stage of a glamorous cabaret, the gratuity she just received from her customer telling me to buy a cup of ramen noodle for myself. I fell in love with her when I slurped the noodle. I also appeared on stage of "Cachucha" or "Tomoshihi", coffee shops at which customers could sing in chorus.



After a while, as an electronic organ started to appear, many professional accordion players lost their jobs. Should I have been a professional player, I must have experienced the gutter of life.

In those days, I was requested by the education board of Minato City to join the preparation for establishing Minato UNESCO Association (MUA). Though I participated in the preparation committee, I seriously wondered if it was the right place for me to be in surrounded by such prominent figures as late Mr. Kenzo Tange and Mr. Kimitada Miwa, the former President and current Honorary President of MUA. I have not been able to participate in Diplomats' Lecture or International Symposium where English was the main language used. On the contrary, I enjoyed myself the World Cooking Workshop, Welcome Party for New Members, Minato City Festival, MUA Salon, UNESCO Youth Forum.

It was my first job as the Vice President of MUA when I was given a responsibility as a chairperson of the planning committee for "Circling the Globe with Songs and Dances" the special event commemorating 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MUA. Eight groups participated in the event. They were International Secondary School, Tokyo International School, Father and Son's Bagpipe, Temple University, Bulgarian Folklore and Musical Instrument Performance, Korean Traditional Dance, Latin American Songs and Dances, Male Choir of Hakumon Glee Club.

Four years have passed since then. However, I still clearly recall those songs and dances in my mind. I am thankful for those who kindly introduced those groups for the committee or those who participated in the event.

We have long been discussing that it is easier said than done in the Standing Directors Meetings. I think back fondly on those days, but it is getting distant as well.

Among many voluntary organizations and international exchange groups, MUA needs to carry out distinctive activities honoring the UNESCO spirits. I do not think it is easy to do so as the time flies and things change so quickly. I sincerely hope that the President, board members and each individual member would do their best to lead MUA to the right direction.

In these days, I mostly spend my time for visiting aged persons at nursing homes or playing an accordion to the songs at the gatherings called "Utageo Kissa," where people enjoy songs in chorus. **(To be continued on P. 7)**