



Running-A Way to Meet Yourself

**A Step-by-step
Approach to My Dream**

Kazuo Sawamoto

**An illustrated diary of a 3,728 miles journey
through all 47 prefectures of Japan
with the encouragement for incurable patients.**

Dear All

One citizen runner went around Japan to encourage incurable patients in 1999. The runner wrote this diary, and was published as an e-book (an abridged edition). The translation of this book were completed by Japanese students and other people who were willing to give a hand. Although translated carefully, if any mistakes are present, I apologize I'll correct any mistakes to ensure the quality of the story to our customers and update it even if it takes time.

Regards,
Matsushita

Contents

Towards My Dream

Setting out in the Rain

Far Away from Home

An Encounter, a Gift from a Typhoon

A Letter Carried on Foot Step by Step

A Fragrant Olive

Breaking the 3,100 Miles-Mark

Thinking About the Patients Until the Last Step

Running Along the Paths Covered with Snow

Looking Back on the Marathon Tour Around Japan

The name of the cities, towns and social phenomena are based off of 1999 contents.

Each foot print

"Cheer up Incurable Patients Encouragement Marathon Tour Around Japan."

From July 25th, 1999 to November 29th



Towards My Dream



It was twenty some years ago that I received a job to make a poster from Mr. Tateo Itoh. He was the secretary general of Hokkaido Incurable Patients Association. The intent of the poster was to promote the association and also the affiliated subgroups. It was also to encourage casual consultations for the illnesses and medical care. Since I have worked for Hokkaido Incurable Patients Association to create awareness. As I continued working for the association, I had several chances to listen to the patients and to know how they fight against their illnesses in their daily lives. Their strength and courage encouraged me to live my own life with more purposes, effort, and appreciation.

One day in Sapporo, a national convention for incurable patients and their families was held by “Japan Patients and families group Council (JPC).” I had the opportunity to attend the lecture of Mr. Murao Kusabuse for the first time. Mr. Kusabuse was provided a blood product which ultimately gave him AIDS. He filed a lawsuit. During this time, Mr. Kusabuse was under a very intense treatment to prevent further illness. Although he had several symptoms, he pushed himself to leave Ohita Prefecture

and come to Sapporo in order to encourage the patients and families. Mr. Kusabuse inched toward the podium, supported by a volunteer. His movements betrayed the fact that he was suffering under extreme conditions. In his speech, he touched upon the psychological torment of hemophiliacs. He had contracted AIDS from the blood products given to him for his treatment. His agony from the discrimination and prejudice; and his anger toward the government and the pharmaceutical company that manufactured the medicine in question. I was deeply moved by the effort he was making in order to support the patients and their families, made at the expense of his own life. I came to have tremendous respect for him considering the courage he had against mountains of hardship. I began to ask myself, “Have I ever lived with purpose?” Mr. Kusabuse’s story had given me a renewed enthusiasm to live with purpose and courage.

I started jogging when I was 30 years old. When I began, I was content with running only short distances. After a while, I began to participate in a marathon event organized by the city. I started to enjoy running long distance. I enjoy running slowly up hills, fields, and along

the shore without the constraint of time. The appearance of the blue sky, the fluffy clouds, the shining sun, the blowing wind, the drizzling rain, and the gentle snow. The swinging trees, the flourishing flowers, the birds and insects have come to tell me the seasons is changing. Before I knew it, running had become a well-established routine.

Ever since I attended Mr. Kusabuse's speech, I've come to question my own perspective toward life. One day when I was jogging through nature, a thought came to me. "I am blessed with physical health. What can a healthy person like me do for patients?" At this particular moment, an idea appeared like a dream. "In return for all the encouragement I've received from many patients, is it possible for me to jog throughout Japan to cheer on and encourage patients and their families?" This thought remained in my head for days. In the summer of 1998, I could no longer keep the thought to myself and finally told Mr. Itoh, who was incharge of the Hokkaido Incurable Patients Association. Mr. Itoh listened to my whole story without interruption. After listening to my entire story so earnestly, he immediately responded by

saying, “A thing like that can give the patients some great encouragement. Let's do it!” I was astonished how quickly Mr. Itoh’s decided, and was overwhelmed with joy. Being able to encourage the patients for all the energy I’ve received from them, I was overwhelmed with gratitude.

I started to prepare for the biggest adventure on my life. The plan for the tour around Japan was decided. The duration would be 128 days. Starting from July 25th to November 29th, 1999. The goal for each day was planned. The entire distance from the north-eastern to the south-western part of Japan amounts to about 3,728miles. I will run through all 47 prefectures in Japan. The event is organized by “JPC.” In each district, my team and I planned to talk with the patients and their families. Visit the governor in each prefecture and the welfare minister in Tokyo in order to discuss a petition for improvement measures for the incurable patients. Also, from each prefecture, I will receive words of encouragement written on a banner. The project was themed, “Cheer up Incurable Patients Encouragement Marathon Tour Around Japan.” The preparation for it took one year. The big

adventure has begun one step at a time.

Wednesday, March 31st

I make it a rule to jog throughout the year with nature. This means running on snowy roads. I live in the suburb of Sapporo and it's difficult to jog for a long time on snowy roads. So, I decided to build my own exercise routine in a gym. From November 13th, 1998 to March 31st, 1999. I had a rigorous daily training of running inside the gym and strengthening exercises to avoiding injuries during the long marathon. The circuit in the gym was 656 feet. I ran laps in the gym everyday. Three hours, four hours, five hours, six hours, eight hours... I increased my running time daily. So that I would not draw unnecessary attention. I kept my personal mission to myself, "to run the entire length of Japan." One week before I finished my training, I told my instructor, Ms. Tomomi Ishikawa, why I was training. At first she was surprised, but then she understood why I was working out so diligently. She responded, "You had a goal in mind! I will support your challenge. I hope you can achieve your goal!"

The last day of training in the gym has arrived. I've made my mind up to run for twelve hours straight. I started running as soon as the gym opened at 10:00

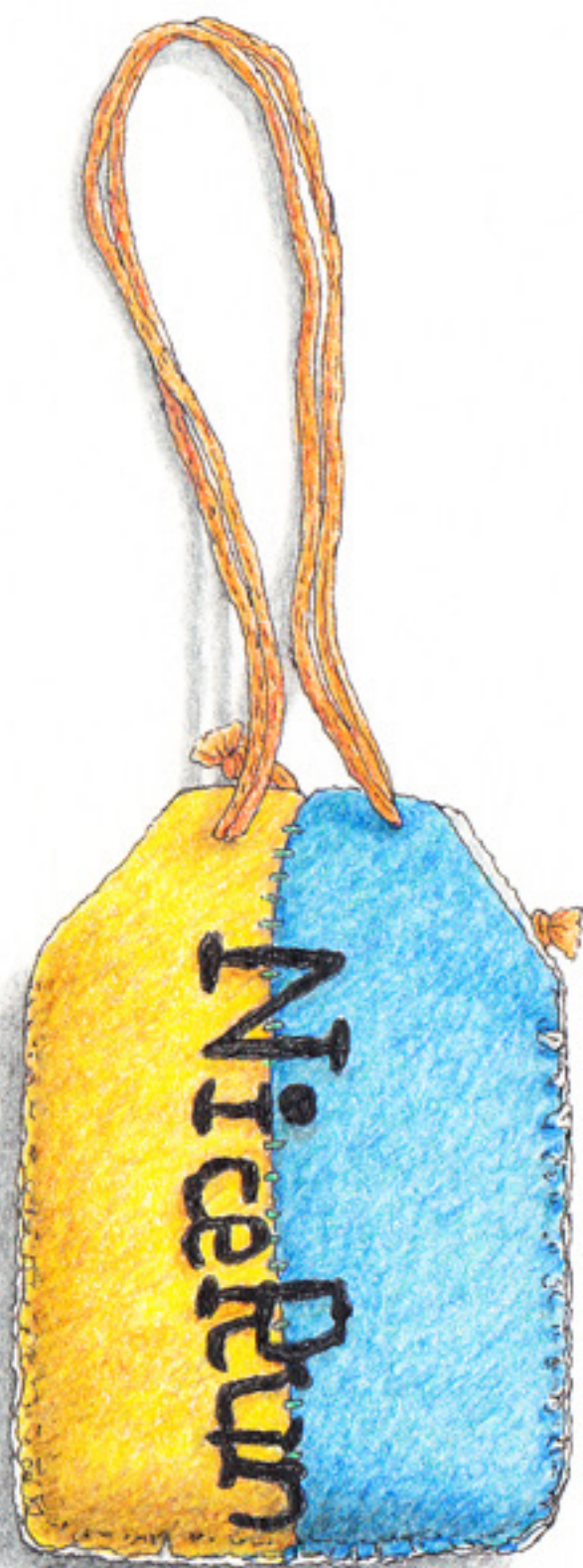
a.m. The scenery through the window changed gradually with the movement of the sun. The rays of the sun coming in through the window on the east side were now coming from above. Eventually the sun entered through the western window. Then, the beautiful evening glow gradually disappeared into darkness. My trainer Ms. Ishikawa, ran next to me for a little while. She said, “Please take care of your health as you go on your adventure. I will be supporting your big event. Please come see me when finish.” At 10:00 p.m. the 12-hour intensive training ended. The next day, I started training outdoors. In the fields and on the road. The training continues.



The fields are still covered with snow, but the buds of pussy willow are starting to appear. White and fluffy, it looks adorable. It looks very nice with the brown caps. It is an expression of the breath of spring of the northern country.

Wednesday, July 21st

It was four days before I set out for the Marathon Tour Around Japan. An envelope came to my mailbox. It was from Ms. Tomomi Ishikawa, my trainer for four months during the winter. When I opened the envelope, a homemade good-luck charm came out. On one side it said, “ お 守 り ” and “Nice Run” on the other side. Both of these words were embroidered with black thread. Inside there was a short prayer and a five-yen coin with a red thread tied through its hole. The prayer said, “Dear god, please protect Mr. Sawamoto from any accidents, and may his endeavor bring happiness to many people.” When I place it on my palm, I could feel the warm thoughts of Ms. Ishikawa from each stitch of the handmade charm. Ms. Ishikawa, thank you so much for this wonderful charm. This charm will run with me throughout Japan. I grasped the charm in my fist and started envisage my journey, “Nice run.”



While I was still in the middle of training for the Marathon Tour Around Japan, I was running on a narrow path in a meadow. The grass was glistening with dew, reflecting the ray of the sun that had just come out. The morning air was still very moist and the birds were singing a crisp morning song. I was likely to absorb the refreshing green of the meadow into my body. When I came to a midway point on the path in the meadow, I saw a strange spherical thing on the trail. "What could it be?" I stopped, squatted, and stared at the object. It was moving slightly. It was a small snail. I gazed at it for a while. The movement was extremely slow but it was moving ahead nevertheless. The trail left behind by the snail was reflecting the morning light, and it was almost sparkling. Tracing back the trail, I found that it came all the way from the grass-covered field. How long did it take to move this distance? After a while I felt as if I could hear the snail murmur to me, "It's okay to be slow. The important thing is that you continue taking those little steps." I thought to myself, "That's it! Small steps are okay. I just have to keep taking one small step at a time and hold onto my goal at any given moment. I'll never give up and have a positive attitude." I felt that the little snail was teaching me a lesson with its slow-paced movement. A warm sensation spread throughout my whole body.

Running - A Way to Meet Yourself
A Step-by-step Approach to My Dream

Author Kazuo Sawamoto
Editing, publisher Eiichi Matsushita

E-book authoring Northern Lights Co., Ltd.

Matsushita Office Co., Ltd.
5-1-2, Irifune, Otaru-shi, Hokkaido, Japan

Cover design by Kazuo Sawamoto (from *JPA national forum 2013* poster)