

**Takehito Nakata**

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I am Takehito Nakata, father of Atsuhito Nakata who gave his life of twenty-five years and three months to undertake duties as a United Nations Volunteer building a peaceful and democratic country in Cambodia. Since our family lost Atsuhito until today, we have received warm words of encouragement from many people in the world. Thanks to them, we have truly been encouraged. Above all, with the help of "Rotary Club of Osaka South," Atsuhito was selected to be a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar and in 1989-90 was given an opportunity to study at the Grinnell College in Iowa, U.S.A. where he was enlightened to choose his future course in life.

Further in 1993, the RI President awarded him a special recognition as a "person who displayed the spirit of Rotary in the best manner." I would like to sincerely thank you for your feelings for Atsuhito.

On a Sunday afternoon in early spring in 1992, our family was having tea together. At that time, Atsuhito had a talk with us. "I want to serve as a United Nations Volunteer in Cambodia and devote myself to the duties to build a peaceful and democratic country." Since he was a child, we were aware that Atsuhito had a dream of pursuing his career in international work. However, to me, "working for the United Nations" was associated with, for example, an international officer working at the United Nations Building in New York while Atsuhito persistently and strongly wished to serve as a volunteer to be actively at more realistic work on site and hand in hand with the Cambodian. The country of Cambodia was originally their own. Rice was harvested twice as much as people ate and in the northwestern part of the country there was the largest lake in the Southeast Asia where about seven hundred sixty kinds of fishes were easy to catch almost unlimitedly. It was a rich, peaceful, and beautiful country. The Angkor Wat is one of the World Heritage sites registered by UNESCO as an irreplaceable precious cultural heritage of the human race that will be handed over to future generations forever and ranks with the Western Pyramid. Gentle smiles on people's faces there were called "Smiles of the Khmer" and admired by the world. It was indeed a peaceful and different world. However, as Cambodia was drawn into the complicated international situation, there were continuous battles among the races for twenty years and people were quite

exhausted.

Although they pledged themselves to one another, "Let's stop the war and build a country we want not by violence but by ourselves," since many Cambodians were killed by certain people in the late 1970's, the number of people who have administrative skills was reduced and they didn't have money. Therefore, they asked the United Nations for cooperation.

There were two strong factors behind Atsuhito's decision to get involved in this.

First was the international nature of my work. Our family lived in Poland in Europe and in November, 1977, when Atsuhito was a fourth grader in his elementary school, we had a short trip in the country. During the trip, we visited a certain place - Auschwitz. The Nazis lead by Hitler killed every last one of people who were against their will. What we saw there was an extreme example of the unspeakable tragedy that can result when human being use the knowledge at their disposal toward aims that run contrary to humanity. After he saw the scenes, Atsuhito repeatedly asked me "how can disputes among people disappear?"

Although he was young, he probably thought as hard as he could. When he graduated from elementary school, he wrote in the card titled "Dreams for Future" with messages from his classmates, "I want to work for the United Nations and preferably become an ambassador."

The flag of the United Nations – it is the color of a cloudless pure blue sky we look up at. The earth is embraced in the branches of olive symbolizing peace. On the earth, anything that discriminates people, which we usually see on a map, is not depicted at all. Did Atsuhito dream of a society where all people on this earth can live in easy circumstances and equally with the dignity of the human race, completing their lives in peace? However, the incident our family saw in Auschwitz in Poland in November, 1977 was not an ancient story. Exactly when we were seeing it with our own eyes, the same incident was happening in Cambodia by certain Cambodians. "People in Cambodia wish to rebuild their own home not by violence but by themselves. I must help them."

Second was what a professor told Atsuhito when he was studying at the Grinnell

College as a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar. The professor said to him, "I'm sure and think it is only natural that you came to this university to look for something. However, this university also needs you. When you are depressed for some reasons in the future, please never forget that you are needed." This phrase, "You are needed," inspired, encouraged and supported Atsuhito who was struggling to find his support as an individual human being.

"Now is the time I should use my time, my passion and my energy to help people in Cambodia fulfill their wishes."

On 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1993, however, for all his faiths in the world of the law and order, Atsuhito closed his life of twenty-five years and three months at the point where it was out of his depth. I think I should give him due credit for what he believed, pursued, and left. The responsibility given to me is to live two worthy lives – Atsuhito's life and what is left of my life. I wish to have faith in the dignity of the human race as well as the future for humanity and make the rest of my life into a proud, noble, and refined one.

These days, we have no hesitation in regarding human life to be precious. But deep down, however, isn't it everyone's feeling that it is only his life that is precious? Following in my son's footsteps, I was appointed Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Volunteers. Until now, I have visited a total of fifty countries and tried to listen to many volunteers in action on sites. "We try to remember every day that we are here to save as many lives as we can and to ease people's pain."

Are there two kinds of human lives – a life that is worth making much of and a life that isn't? I really want you to remember proudly, and never forget, that, when the right of people on earth to complete their lives in peace is trampled on by violence, there was a "World Citizen" who tried to protect it, sacrificing his own, one and only life which was to him the most precious thing in this world.

Dear Rotary Club members, as you are celebrating the organization's memorable 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the next year, please remember, and never forget, this phrase: "We are all, all needed by others."

Thank you very much. (Complete)