

Ruth Sasaki
(1975~77, 79~83)

I was at LIOJ from 1975-77, and again from 1979-83. I was interviewed by Roland Harker, LIOJ's first principal, and "served" under Bill Harshbarger, Roger Pehlke, and Lance Knowles. My ex Lance and I hired Bob Ruud, John Fleischauer, and Warrick Liang, who all subsequently became directors, as teachers.

LIOJ gave me an opportunity to know myself and to know the world. It was there that I discovered that I loved teaching, and that teaching was a matter of structuring a supportive environment and then getting out of the way and letting students learn. I loved hanging out in the teachers' workroom with my colleagues, discussing techniques and student personalities, and socializing at GAL or Part 2, the local "snacks," after hours. I won't say I loved the karaoke with students, but I did my part.

LIOJ gave me an opportunity to know the beating heart of Japan. I glimpsed the life of the salaryman, took walks out along the Odakyu tracks into the rice fields, went ice skating in Gora in the winter and watched fireworks and listened to cicadas in the summer. Walking down the back way from school to my apartment in Minami-cho, I remember the smells of the *ofuro* and the sounds of families having dinner, the fragrance of the castle wisteria on a balmy May evening.

As a Japanese-American growing up in the United States, I had sometimes been made to feel marginal—i.e., neither Japanese nor American. At LIOJ each month, people came together from various parts of the world and formed a unique, blended culture—one that was neither quite Japanese nor quite American. Some might call it "strange," but to me it was the key to the future. I found that I thrived in those spaces in between, like moss, filling and bridging the gaps. Instead of feeling "neither," I felt "both," and it was from that place of wholeness that I was able to write the stories that became my book, *The Loom*. After leaving LIOJ, I gravitated naturally to the field of intercultural communication and continued to work with corporate clients such as Intel Japan and Procter & Gamble Far East as an intercultural business specialist, and with Clarke Consulting Group, where I eventually became the Director of Professional Services. This work enabled me to travel to Japan two or three times a year, to "stay in touch."

My LIOJ experience had a profound effect on my life, and many of the friendships that I made there endure to this day.