

How I Became a Girl Scout

Akiko Oguri

Honourable judges, ladies and gentlemen, fellow students: I was born near the Sumida River where the seagulls flap their wings and the air is fresh. It was the Year of the Fiery Monkey, Hinoe Saru. Girls born in this year are said to be shrewish in nature. I don't know if the saying is true or not, but it seems to apply to some extent in my case.

When I was in primary school, I don't remember how it happened or what he had done to deserve it, but one day I hit a boy in my class very hard. This was talked about for some time, and you can imagine how upset my mother was, and how she scolded me.

There are only two children in my family – my brother and I. But we make quite a contrast. He is quiet and prefers staying home to outdoor activities. Often my father would complain, and say that my brother and I

ought to change places. But that was impossible. Therefore my mother did what she thought might satisfy my desire for action, in an attempt to make me co-operate more kindly with other people.

One day when I was in third grade, she took me to a Girl Scout meeting. I remember that day very well. The grey uniforms and the wine-red scarfs were very attractive. The girls greeted me with friendly smiles, but I was shy and timid at first, so I could not reply to them at once. Their polite but friendly manners impressed me deeply, and I decided immediately to join the Girl Scout Club. You can imagine how impatient I was for the next meeting.

The meetings consist of two parts. One is a discussion on various topics, and the other is activities and organized outings. In the discussion we talk about how we can help people around us, what we can do in our everyday lives to become better women and more useful to society, and so on.

Our activities include such things as volunteer work in hospitals and cleaning public parks, as well as learning practical skills like tying knots, semaphore and other useful things for camp life. Everybody must work together to do their best. When we go camping without our parents, we have to do everything by ourselves and help each other. The most pleasant times in camp life are mealtimes and sitting around the camp fire. As soon as the leader blows her whistle the scouts on duty run for the buckets and baskets of food. It is all really great fun. At night we gather around the camp fire singing songs and dancing. Thus we experience life in the heart of Nature away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The Girl Scout Club satisfies my need for action, and besides, it teaches

me how to be friendly toward others – and more like a woman, I hope, than a shrew.

Thank you.