

Title	ON hours, OFF hours
Sub Title	
Author	
Publisher	Faculty of Science and Technology, Keio University
Publication year	2012
Jtitle	New Kyurizukai No.10 (2012. 7) ,p.6- 6
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	"
Genre	Article
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=KO50001003-00000010-0006

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Yukio Nozaki's path to becoming a researcher

Here Mr. Nozaki looks back at his path to becoming a researcher, focusing on his early nine years – after graduation from high school, followed by entrance into Keio University, acquisition of doctorate, and becoming a research associate at Kyushu University.



High school days

As a high school student, I only studied my favorite subjects (mathematics, chemistry and a bit of physics), almost neglecting all the other subjects. Like other friends around me, I wished to go on to a medical university. But studying scientific subjects one-sidedly naturally didn't suffice. So I wavered in my decision on which course I should choose. One day I happened to find a notice on a school billboard saying that Keio University Faculty of Science and Technology would invite school-recommended students for admission. This moment marked the beginning of my life at Keio.



Admitted to Keio and enrolled in Department of Physics at the invitation of a friend

Japan's bubble economy was at its heyday when I was admitted to Keio; the Hiyoshi Campus was bright and lively. I was invited to the tennis circle, where I met a colleague who wanted to be enrolled in the Department of Physics. Persuaded by him, I soon found myself enrolled in the Department of Physics as well. My campus life was a busy one, pressed by preparation of reports on my specialized subjects day after day. It was our rule to have a "self-examination" meeting (in fact, a "drinking party") at "Hiyoura" (Japanese pub) twice a week after physics experiments.



Joining Miyajima lab

Intrigued by "superconductivity" that shows interesting phenomena, such as zero electric resistance and magnetic levitation, I belonged to the Miyajima lab specializing in superconductivity and magnetism. Just before submitting my graduation thesis, I underwent a lung operation and was hospitalized due to a hole in my lung due to too much singing (at a "karaoke" sing along music studio). But somehow I could graduate thanks to warm support from my teacher, friends and parents.



Master's course

Hearing that Dr. Otani, the assistant professor of our lab, would visit France during the holidays to participate in experiments at a French national institute (in Grenoble), I volunteered to accompany him (never thinking of myself as a potential burden!). Living together with my teacher's foreign colleagues (photo), I devoted myself to analyzing results of experiments using superconducting thin-films.



An unforgettably horrible experience

Surrounded by rugged and rocky mountains, Grenoble is well known as a rock-climbing paradise. I have exceptional acrophobia (fear of heights) but a French researcher persistently invited me for a rock-climbing tour. I finally I agreed to his offer as a memory of my stay in France, and tried climbing a snowy mountain. He said it was a mountain for beginners, but it was nothing but a horrible, unforgettable experience; I really thought I was on the brink of death.



Doctoral course

Dr. Otani, an outstanding research scientist whom I had been aiming at, left Keio to assume a post elsewhere. With this event as an impetus, I began to tackle a new research theme. After experiencing a number of failures, I could finally succeed in the micro-processing of ferromagnetic film, and acquired a doctoral degree for research into the analysis of its magnetic structure. I'm still truly thankful to younger students at the lab who encouraged me at an "all-you-can-eat" Korean barbecue restaurant when I was down due to a deadlock in research.