Title	I've always done my best in everything, whether it is study, sports or hobbies. What I am today is nothing less than the result of this way of life : Associate Professor Yoshimitsu Aoki
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Associate Professor Yoshimitsu Aoki

I've always done my best in everything, whether it is study, sports or hobbies. What I am today is nothing less than the result of this way of life

Brought up as the first son of an electrical shop owner in town, Dr. Aoki spent his childhood familiarizing himself with all kinds of electrical appliances and PCs. In his high school and college days, he was extremely active in extracurricular activities such as judo, rugby, band and so on. Indeed, throughout his life he has tackled study, sports and hobbies with all his might and produced a number of achievements in research as well. He is one of the teachers who enjoy an overwhelming popularity among Keio students. How did Dr. Aoki become a researcher? We asked him about his personal background and his career as a researcher.

We heard that you were born in a family running an electrical shop in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture. Is that right?

Right. My parents were running an electrical appliance shop. Whenever my father opened his mouth, he talked only about electrical appliances – even at home! It was only natural that I became interested in electrical appliances. What's more, my father liked novelties. An electrical shop is a community-oriented business by nature, but my father's shop seems to have been a trendsetting one.

Another example typifying my father's shop was that it was quick to handle PCs and opened to visitors the whole of its second floor as a PC-dedicated space. On my way from elementary school, I often visited the PC floor together with my friends in the neighborhood, enjoying time programming games while referring to the "Basic Magazine." It was in those days that I vaguely felt that I would choose the scientific course in the future.

In the meantime, I loved sports of various kinds. As an elementary school boy, I took up soccer and swimming; when I entered junior high school, I joined the volleyball club eventually to become the captain.

You then advanced to a high school attached to Waseda University, didn't you?

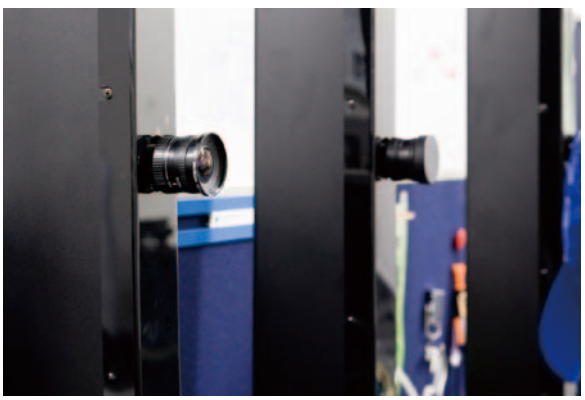
Being a high school attached to Waseda University meant that there would be no university entrance exam, so I was able to adsorb myself in extracurricular club activities. In fact, my school life was extremely busy – setting up a cheering party together with my seniors; playing active roles as a judo club member; beating a drum at a light music club; at the school cultural festival, I held positions in three different bands, and then appeared on cheering party's stage during the night festival.

That said, I also studied as hard as other students. Incidentally, the theme of my high school graduation thesis was: "Energy toward the 21st century – The necessity of solar energy as an alternative energy in place of fossil fuels." In those days, I was convinced that petroleum would be completely depleted by the dawn of the 21st century.

Did you go on to the scientific course without worrying about the choice?

Actually not. When I was in the third year of high school, I was a bit in doubt as to which course to choose, the Faculty of Political Science and Economics or Faculty of Science and Engineering. But I finally carried out my original intention and chose the latter. What attracted my interest was the study of space physics, so I chose the Department of Physics and Applied Physics.

That said, I became absorbed in sports again. I joined the faculty's rugby club; I spent the first one and a half years of the campus life with practice, games and drinking parties day in, day out. In September when I was a sophomore, however, I had a neck bone broken when I was making a tackle during a game



The lab has a simulated living environment equipped with image sensors that can capture human movements and object shapes. This environment is useful in promoting research on behavioral recognition under a real environment.

against the University of Tokyo. It was the first cervical vertebra. But it were the second cervical vertebra or any of the lower neck bones, one half of my body would have been paralyzed.

I was confined in hospital for three months, ruining the latter half of the second year on campus. Despite such circumstances, my classmates were kind enough to lend me their notebooks; I was somehow able to clear the new year exams and become a junior without staying two years as a sophomore.

Incidentally, although I give up rugby soon after the accident, I returned to the rugby club from the middle of the third year.The last game as a senior was against the Keio (Faculty of Science and Technology) team. Coming from behind, our team finally won a victory with a try during overtime. The game took place nowhere else but on the rugby field on this Yagami campus of Keio! I cherish this memory even today.

What was your motive for undertaking research into images?

Following the serious injury I suffered during the rugby game, as a junior I began to feel it difficult to understand theoretical physics-related subjects. At that time I attended a "Principles of Measurement" lecture by Professor Shuji Hashimoto who would later become my teacher, when I was impressed with the depth of measurement. My interest suddenly shifted from science to engineering. I didn't think about joining the Hashimoto lab seriously. My intention was an easygoing one. Since the lab was so popular, I thought it might be easier for me to find employment with a company if I failed in the graduate school exam.

Fortunately, I passed the graduate school exam; at the graduate school I took up the study into facial image recognition and synthesis. For example, one of my studies concerned simulated images showing changes in facial appearances and teeth occlusion before and after orthodontic treatment.

I made a presentation of the results of this research at a meeting of the Japanese Academy of Facial Studies, which attracted the attention of a professor of Kyushu University Faculty of Dentistry and led to joint research. I was lucky to have the opportunities to experience, in the early stages of my career, such joint research projects and advising students of the image study group.

Later I obtained a doctoral degree and had served as a research assistant at Waseda University, then proceeded to Shibaura Institute of Technology (SIT – College of Information Science and Engineering) as an assistant professor in 2002 almost at the same time as I got married. In the first year at SIT, I took care of ten students, and a cumulative total of 80 students up to the end of the academic year 2007.

You came to Keio University in the 2008 academic year. What is your impression of Keio?

My impression of Keio students is that they are smarter than Waseda's, good or bad. A good thing about Keio is that senior students take good care of their juniors. Keio is also complete with systems that encourage academic pursuits. Three of our lab's doctoral students studied overseas taking advantage of these systems.

As an extremely busy researcher, what are you doing for relaxation?

Two of my children – an elementary school fourth-grader boy and a kindergarten middle-grader girl – are practicing judo. So I get rid of stress by joining them in judo practice once a week. I video all of judo matches of my small ones, editing the videos and analyzing tactics myself (*Laughter*). Sometime in the future, I'd like to take up research into image-based automatic analysis to identify judoists' center of gravity while they are practicing.

◎ **Some words from students . . .** ◎

● A hot-blooded person with a bit of severity, Dr. Aoki is a truly wonderful teacher who is always and sincerely considerate of us students. In particular, he always makes the best possible effort to prepare an ideal research environment for us. He was once a rugby player himself. He reminds us of the image of Mr. Takizawa, the hero of the "School Wars" TV drama series (Laughter). From Dr. Aoki, all of us are learning many things . . . the delight and severity of learning, among others.

(Reporter & text writer : Madoka Tainaka)

For the full text of this interview
http://www.st.keio.ac.jp/kyurizukai

I'd like my students to address any challenge while always remaining conscious of what they are doing relative to the real world. Doing so will enable them to appreciate the true value and significance of their jobs.

Yoshimitsu Aoki

Born in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, Mr. Aoki graduated from Waseda University Department of Applied Physics in 1996, then completed the doctoral course at Waseda University Graduate School of Science and Engineering (Physics and Applied Physics) in 2001. Doctor of Engineering. After serving as a research assistant at Waseda University Faculty of Science and Engineering, he became an assistant professor for Shibaura Institute of Technology Department of Information and Engineering, then assumed the current position as an associate professor at Department of Electronics and Electrical Engineering, Keio University Faculty of Science and Technology in 2008. In 2013, he concurrently became a board member of IDEAQUEST Inc. and continues to spearhead research aiming to put Keio-initiated image sensing technologies into practical use in the medical field. His specialties include perceptual information processing, intelligent robotics, media informatics/database, measurement engineering, and medical systems.