

TSUKUBA ALUMNI

Photographer

FUNAO Osamu

Advantages of Studying at the University of Tsukuba in My Career and Life

The story about how I became a photographer after graduating from the College of Biological Sciences is long. I loved insects as a child and was fascinated by the wonder of every tiny living system. I am interested in ecology and in exploring the relationships between discrete organisms, which is why I chose to study environmental biology. Genetic engineering was trending when I entered university, and colleges offering environment-related courses were still rare. I took my first serious documentary photographs after graduating from university and when I was living with native tribes in the African rainforest. As I touched these people living off the earth's bounty, living as hunter-gatherers without agriculture, I realized that their lifestyle was very connected to my studies at university. This experience helped me consolidate my desired direction.

A nature exploration club was active at that time at the University of Tsukuba. I joined it and began mountain climbing with an exciting group of people who wanted to perform activities that many did not endeavor. After I graduated, I joined a working people's mountaineering club and attempted to master climbing. The first overseas mountain I climbed was Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. My present career actually began with that trip.

My Fondest Memories as a Student

I moved into a dormitory when I entered the University of Tsukuba. It was the first time I



Pursuing My Passions

lived away from my parents. I spent time with my friends almost daily: we cooked meals together, which was a delightful experience. Students from all over the country came to the University of Tsukuba along with some international students. This diversity was interesting and extremely stimulating.

It was still rare to travel abroad at that time. I wanted to visit the Himalayas and such locations, but I did not have the money, so ultimately, I could not travel to my favored destinations. However, I had this vague feeling at that time that I could venture outside Japan and accomplish some feat. It is too late for me now, but if I had gone abroad and met someone as a student, I could have achieved other possibilities, and not become a photographer.

Message to Students of the University of Tsukuba

I may not represent a supportive senior. However, you must not focus merely on your studies as you attend university. I would like you to experience your interests and follow your fascinations wholeheartedly. It is perfectly fine if it is just a passing interest.

Just because you graduated in science does not imply that you must obtain a job in the sciences; the same is true for the humanities. Professional schools for photographers exist, but they can only teach you the skills. You must yourself work out what you want to photograph. Even if your pursuits do not lead you directly to a job, they will definitely help you in some manner in the future. I can certainly assert this fact with confidence!

PROFILE FUNAO Osamu

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Born in Hyogo Prefecture
Graduated in 1984 from the College of Biological Sciences,
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