

Letter from Masuo Yasui to Taiitsuro Yasui, 18 July 1908

English Translation

Pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of 8

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I am writing this letter late at night in a sleepy state, so please forgive any typos or omissions that may have occurred.

I received your letter dated July 18 and read it with great appreciation. I am sorry to hear that you have been busy with your preparations. As I mentioned in my letter dated yesterday, I am also currently extremely busy with the establishment of the company and regret that I am unable to devote much time to my own business. I am doing this for the sake of my fellow countrymen and the public, so to speak, and as the so-called "sacrifice parents for a greater cause" the proverb goes. I believe that this cannot be helped. However, now that the fulfillment of our great desire is in sight, I believe that I will soon be able to concentrate all our efforts on our brothers' projects.

According to your letter, Mr. Yoshinari runs a restaurant as well as a contracting business and an employment agency, which is similar to Sasaki's behavior toward Kajiwara in Ujigawa¹. As you know, when I met him by chance on the way with you, my big brother, one day before our departure, he suggested that I do contracting business. And now he is running the business himself, just like Takatsuna Sasaki abruptly and cleverly said to Kajiwara in the depths of the Uji River, "Sir Kajiwara, your stirrups are loose, please tighten them," and then outstripped him while he was tightening them. It is true that the hearts of people do not change now and in the past.

Even if he started it first, our idea was conceived before his. We also have already made this clear to the public long ago. In particular, we had talked to both Mr. Okita and Mr. Nishizaki about this matter about a month ago, and they agreed with our proposal. Therefore, whoever doing this business now should not feel the slightest bit of pain or itch toward us, and of course, they can open their business fairly and openly. If there is something wrong with the other party, there is no need for us to interfere in any way. Of course, it goes without saying that two Japanese brokers in a small city like Hood River (which may well become a promising city in the future) is not only unnecessary but detrimental to its survival. If you do not want to bend your will for the sake of a few, then I believe that you should carry out your will with dignity. My good friend Mr. Okita agrees

¹ Referring to "Udagawa no senjin" episode in the Tale of the Heike, a war tale in the late twelfth century. In this episode, Takatsuna Sasaki, who is competing for the lead, outwits his rival Kagesue Kajiwara by pretending to give him advice while crossing the river.



with me on this point. But please do not misunderstand me. Masuo² is not a fool who thinks it is a good idea for comrades to compete with each other without cause. I think there is nothing wrong with two parties cooperating with each other to launch a big project at times.

You seemed to be envious of the low rent of the place Mr. Taruhara rents. But in fact, it is not that cheap. You seemed to envy only the prosperity of the stores on the surface. Perhaps because of my own stupidity, I could not understand what you were envying. Maybe due to my inferior complex, I feel like I have never heard from you, big brother, say that this is a promising business since you came to our city. It seems that you are only pessimistically worrying about the future. Masuo is totally sorry for recommending such a project, which would be unprofitable in your opinion because he is foolish enough to plan this project. I regret to say that if Masuo had had the wise foresight that you have, this dissatisfaction would never have happened. I never once said that this plan would be profitable from the start, but rather, in my recollection, I said that "it may not be profitable for a year or two, but I think it will gradually become profitable." I thought that my brother was fully prepared for this, but in hindsight, I see that you neither agreed nor prepared for it. It is owing to Masuo's unworthiness that things have come to this first and foremost.

It would seem to you that Masuo had allowed his brother to embark on such a project without a certain degree of confidence in himself, but this is not true. Masuo may be stupid and unworthy to begin with, but he has spent more than 50 days and visited several times to carry out 5-6 projects. Also, he consulted with his best friends who are familiar with the local situation, and after much contemplation, he took up the pen to express his intentions and asked both brothers for their support. I may be a fool, but I thought it was a sure business. Of course, everyone sees things differently, and it is not easy to say whether or not Masuo's plan is correct. In my personal opinion, I would like to predict that the advantages of this plan are certain. The truth or falsehood of this plan will not be known until a later date. If, as you said in your letter, the future looks somewhat uncertain, I think it would be better to back out of the project as soon as possible. A wise man once said, "If you have foresight, you will stay away from danger, and if you avoid it, you will escape its evil." Thus, there is an old saying, "A wise man never approaches danger."

Regarding the loss we have incurred until today, I expect to be able to reimburse by the middle of next year at the latest. I remember very well that you said to me, "If we stop now, the loss will not be so great." You can clearly see the failure ahead like this, can't you? Even though the difference between the wise and the foolish is as great as the

² This letter is written by Masuo, but he is referring himself as a third person.

difference between heaven and earth and between clouds and loam, what a great gap there is between you and me in seeing the future.

I would like to add a few more words: if we inspire and encourage our courage, if we are determined to take on the challenge and not be discouraged by even the slightest failure, we will surely succeed. Who is the most successful person among our fellow countrymen in North America? Needless to say, it is Mr. Ushijima himself. He is a man who has never failed from beginning to end and has achieved the successes of today. My dear brother, do you have the courage not to condemn Masao's abusive words toward his superiors, but rather to fight with your two younger brothers as your allies to the end of the line? We have dependable cousins and many sympathetic countrymen. Why should we only be pessimistic? Masuo is not a man who calls for optimism without thinking about what is going on before and after.

Just now, I received a telegram with some very good news for us.

“U. Tel. July 16, '08
121 N. 15 St. Portland, Ore.
Masuo Yasui.
I go To-morrow [sic] morning:
R. Fujimoto.”³

By the day after tomorrow at the latest, the hot-blooded three brothers will be united in everything they do. As we go over our plans, I am sure that the three of us will come up with some good ideas that only we can do. There is no need to be pessimistic. Masuo deeply regrets that he did not fully explain what was on his mind. I hope to travel to your place tomorrow evening or Sunday night to express my apologies. I hope you will forgive me if I am rude in my rambling due to our closeness. Please find enclosed a letter from our brother Renichi.

From Masuo
July 18, 1:11 a.m.
To my dear Brother,

³ The telegram was written in English.