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Interview with Yoshio Kondo

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Yoshio Kondo

Video Roll # 17

Q: -- *quality revolution, Japan was in crisis.*

KONDO: Yes.

Q: *Quality. Several years ago, the United States was in crisis. Quality. Is there some relationship? Does a country have to be in crisis in order to pursue quality?*

KONDO: Well, I think this is a difference in the feeling of the people. Something happens. But, well, some people feel this is a crisis. Some people, this is not a crisis. I think that's a difference.

And to utilize the crisis as much as possible, I think it's a very important point in management. I could mention many examples in Japan. May I mention one thing?

For example: you know, the Komatsu Company. It's a construction machinery company, bulldozers and ... I think it's beginning of 1960's, so it's a long, long time ago. But the international trade will be open or liberalized.

And Komatsu people were very afraid that if the quality of their bulldozers is like, this, it's no power to prevent the import of American Caterpillar. It's a kind of crisis. So the company decided to introduce quality control, company ... quality control, and try to improve the product quality, as much as possible, as soon as possible.

And, yes, they won, they ... price. And, well, of course we had many Caterpillar bulldozers in Japan, but, well, the Komatsu was a bad (?) product.

So this is the kind of utilization of a crisis. I don't know whether Komatsu was bankrupted, if they do not introduce quality control. But I think the management people utilized the crisis of international trade liberalization as much as possible. I think this is just one example.

Q: Today, it would certainly seem as though Japan is no longer in crisis. You are perceived by the world as a leader in quality, your products sell in all markets, and most categories dominate. Now that Japan is no longer in crisis, what will happen to this massive quality effort?

KONDO: Do you think so? I think Japanese management people have the sort of crisis, even today. Well, basically, as I told, we -- Japan has no abundant natural resources. That's basically one source of crisis. If the importers stopped, what happens?

So, well, Japan, of course, made a very big oil tank many places and stopped the crude oil. This is just a counter-measure. And the quality of the Asian countries is now catching up very rapidly. This is also a kind of crisis and so on.

So, well, I think Japanese management people are not so much comfortable. I think they have the feeling of crisis -- even today.

Q: I have asked a number of people this question: Japan has been involved in quality management for 40 years.

KONDO: Yeah.

*Q: The United States actively five years, ten years.
Shorter time.*

KONDO: Well, we import -- we imitate America.

*Q: Well, you did. But when you imitated America, back
in the 1950's, Dr. Deming came to Japan, Dr. Juran came to
Japan.*

KONDO: Yes.

*Q: The Japanese listened and did in a way that people in
America did not.*

KONDO: That's the difference, yes.

*Q: Why do you think that happened? Why did Japan
listen and America did not?*

KONDO: Well, especially, just after the war, Japanese went up ... almost everything from foreign countries, to reconstruct the industries. We were very thirsty and we're at the bottom. How to climb up. That's a very big incentive for Japanese people. I think that's the difference.

No, not only Japan. Germany, also, ... , and climbed up.

*Q: When you were at the bottom of a well, the height is
on every side of you. How did Japan decide what to absorb
and who to learn from? You had many choices, and yet you
chose America.*

KONDO: Well, I think we do not have much choice.
Yes. I think American people are very kind at that time.

And not only Dr. Juran, Dr. Deming, but the -- yes -- occupational forces, especially the civil communication. I don't know the name of the office.

This American office, in Japan, occupational force, was very kind to hold the seminar, management seminar. I think it's a CCS seminar that? And they teach the Japanese management and quality control is one lesson in this course. And, yes.

So I think virtually for Japanese people at that time, there's not much choice. We try to imitate, and we want to catch up America.

Q: Now, you certainly have caught up with America, and it is clear that you have passed America.

KONDO: In some part.

Q: What I was saying before is that it is almost as though now, with your head start, 40 years, it's almost as though Japan is now the father and America is now the child. What can the child learn from the father about quality?

(OFF CAMERA DISCUSSION WITH TRANSLATOR)

KONDO: Well, I think the answer is very simple: it's the Japanese way of quality control. But, well, this is just a start point as Japan, 40 years ago, we learned a lot from United States. May I can say this: American style quality control.

This was our start. But we improved it. We tried to fit this way, American way, to the Japanese way. This kind of improvement is a second step. And this is very important point. Not only the imitation.

Q: Why is quality taught at Japanese universities?

KONDO: Why, you said?

Q: The subject of quality is taught and studied at universities in Japan. Why is that?

KONDO: Well, not much, not much lectures on quality. I think in the Japanese universities are not many professors teaching quality. I think in European countries and American -- in America, they establish the department of total quality management, and so on.

So the -- I think the implication of quality will be repressed. Maybe America or European countries will catch up and go first.

Q: You were very kind earlier in mentioning that, at least, one of the teachers who came over and taught was Dr. Juran. What, to this day, are some of the key lessons that were taught by Dr. Juran?

KONDO: Yes, I think we learn many things. But I myself, and the most important point, is general viewpoint or -- maybe I can say global viewpoint. Not only the narrow and Japanese viewpoint. This is a very important lesson which -- from Dr. Juran.

Yes, I met him very often in Japan. In the foreign countries, too. So we talk many things. And I myself often feel that different way of thinking from us. That's a very important point for me.

Q: Years from now, when you are 150 years old and I am 150 years old, we will look back at this time of the Japanese quality revolution. What will it say in that book about Dr. Juran and his contribution to the quality revolution?

KONDO: I think his contribution is very big, after -- well, 150 or --

Q: When we say, in this case, would you mention Dr. Juran by name, not he.

KONDO: I see, yes. Yes, Dr. Juran has a very big contribution to Japanese industries, yes. We especially, before Dr. Juran came, the scope or the field of activity of quality control in Japan is rather narrow. Only the manufacturing and inspection processes.

And Dr. Juran taught us, and emphasized to us, the quality control activities, closely related to, of course, the designing, sales, marketing. Maybe I can almost all branches of the company.

And important thing is the leadership of top management. That's a very important thing, with Juran.

Q: Could you tell me, please, a little bit about some of the management practices that are still being used here in Japan that were taught back in the 1950's by Dr. Juran?

KONDO: I think well, just a moment.

Yes. In 1974, Dr. Juran came. This is maybe third or fourth visit to Japan. And Dr. Juran held the QC seminar for the middle management and top management. And I attended these courses from start to end. It was about one week.

And what his topics was -- for example, human aspect of quality control. That's motivation things. Product reliability programs. Many things.

And these lessons are still being utilized in Japan, yes. Of course, the form becomes changed. But these are still very important aspect in the quality control activities.

Q: You mentioned that you have spent many times with Dr. Juran. Tell me about some of the best times, the most enjoyable times you spent with him.

KONDO: Yes. After--

(INTERRUPTION)

KONDO: After the seminar was finished, in 1974, Dr. Juran visited -- no. Kyoto, my home town, with Mr. Noguchi. And we enjoyed one day sight-seeing tour in Japan -- in Kyoto. We enjoyed very much, yes.

One thing I still remember is we visited the Duanji (?) Temple in Kyoto. This temple is very old. Then Buddhist temple. And the garden is famous. It's a rock garden. And it was in November, I think. So the temple was very crowded by the visitors and the school students.

But Dr. Juran went to the ... and sit on ... And he didn't move; just see this stone garden for several minutes. I think he visited before that temple. And after this last, Dr. Juran says, this garden is very good for the meditation. So this word actually represents his character. He's a kind of a philosopher.

And also, yes, I also remember this. This is not sight-seeing. He always has some card in his pocket here and

pencil. And when we discuss ... and he write something, short sentence, and put it in here.

We believe that these cards becomes a big paper and becomes his book. So, in this way, Dr. Juran collected data.

Q: People have told us about Dr. Juran's humor. Have you seen examples of Dr. Juran's humor? Maybe you could tell us about it.

KONDO: Yes, I heard from him, from Dr. Juran, that he is a very speedy or swift walker. And his -- well -- style is very good. And one day he told me why he walked so quickly. He wrote this. He was in Minneapolis when he was young, and he went to private school from the home. The distance is not near. And Minneapolis was very cold in winter. And he had to walk very quickly.

Well, this is not humor, but I remember this, yes.

Q: At some point, Dr. Juran will no longer be with us. If you had an opportunity to speak to Dr. Juran's great grandchildren, who may never ever have a chance to meet him, what would you tell his great grandchildren about the great grandfather they never knew?

KONDO: Well, your grandfather contributed to the development of Japanese industries very much. His contribution is great. Well, maybe, not only for Japan, but from the Japanese side. I want to say Japan.

Q: He's going to be 87 years old and, at times when other people are gardening, relaxing, Dr. Juran's still working, working, working. What makes him keep working, do you think?

KONDO: I don't know. Maybe he a lot of cause to summarize and to make, to prepare some book ...

Q: There is something that you could help us with, if you are comfortable answering this question: in the United States today, many people are taking credit for the quality revolution.

KONDO: Taking what?

Q: Credit, saying we made Japan's quality happen. Now, from what we've learned, Japan really made it happen, the Japanese people, but had many teachers. We are starting to see Dr. Deming and Dr. Juran almost as two halves of one person. For people in the United States who will see this, can you help us and help them learn the part that Dr. Deming did, and the part that Dr. Juran did, because they are two different men, each of whom made contributions.

(OFF CAMERA DISCUSSION WITH TRANSLATOR)

KONDO: Well, if I say very shortly: Dr. Deming taught us the statistics of method, or statistical way of thinking. And well, in which the PDC Cycle is included. I think this is a very important basis of quality control.

And Dr. Juran taught us the expansion of merit -- Dr. Deming's idea -- to the whole company. And the company-wide quality control is very important. Quality in company management. Yes. In one word, this is what we learned.

Q: What have we not spoken about that you believe the people of Japan, the people of the United States, ought to know about Dr. Juran? Only maybe you could tell them.

(OFF CAMERA DISCUSSION WITH TRANSLATOR)

KONDO: I think I talked many things about Dr. Juran, so I have no idea about it. But maybe one point: is Dr. Juran's article or paper which appeared in the May -- maybe Mayor March -- issue last year, in Quality Progress. The title was: Strategy for World Class Quality.

I read it very, very interested. What he wrote is the strategies which American company took -- well American excellent companies are taking. These companies won the Malcolm Baldrige Award. And some companies are now preparing for the application.

And the content of this paper is very interesting. Dr. Juran summarized many measures, strategies, or important points.

My feeling is, this is not special American. What we are talking in Japan is very similar to this article. So the -- I think nowadays, the difference between Japanese and American way of quality improvement may be diminishing.

Maybe the good, efficient way -- maybe I can say the true way is one. And we are approaching to this true strategy, effective strategy. So in this sense, his paper was very interesting to me. So I suggest the people to read this paper again.

Q: Thank you very much.

(END OF TAPE NUMBER SEVENTEEN)

Yoshio Kondo

(Interviewed on 18 March 1992, Tokyo, Japan)

Video Roll # 16

Q: In English, would you spell your name?

KONDO: My name is Yoshio Kondo. Spelled,
Y-O-S-H-I-O K-O-N-D-O.

Q: And your title, please.

KONDO: Now I'm the Professor Emeritus of Kyoto
(?) University.

Q: We will talk about three areas.

(INTERRUPTION, DROWNING OUT

INTERVIEWER'S VOICE)

Q: Talking about the Japanese quality revolution. To us, in the United States, it seems that for 40 years, Japanese quality has been almost magic. It is so great. Why are Japan's quality efforts so very successful?

KONDO: Maybe firstly, I can say that. That's the end of the World War Second

Q: You are more than welcome if you would like to do this in Japanese.

KONDO: I'll try to speak in English.

Q: Would you prefer English?

KONDO: Uh hm. So at the end of the Second World War, well, you know the Japanese economy, or everything in Japan, is just at the bottom. There is no way to go down further. We all need to try. So I'm talking about our mind at that time.

So -- well, I think -- well, no one said that, but this kind of thing is just maybe a slogan, Japanese slogan. That is, if America can, why can't we. So -- and also, the help from your country -- I mean, Dr. Juran, Dr. Deming -- was very, very helpful for us.

And also we tried to follow, as honestly as possible, what Dr. Deming, Dr. Juran says. Well, I think that's very important reason we were very successful in the quality revolution.

Another condition is -- we don't have abundant natural resources in Japan. We have to import; we have to buy everything, almost everything. So we have to earn money to buy them. That is export, to export the finished product, the quality becomes a very big problem. That's a very necessary, important condition for us. The quality improvement, maybe against quality revolution.

That's very necessary for the Japanese people to survive. People say there are many reasons of the successful quality revolution in Japan. For example, the Japanese are the homogeneous people. Higher education ... , and so on.

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Large unemployment and so on. But maybe I can add, maybe two reasons. Well, maybe the contents are the same, but one is tight labor market from the beginning of 1960' s. The industries have recovered.

And, from that time, the industrial people, management people, are very difficult to hire many young employees. And also, the educational level of these young people is elevated, and they do not want to work.

The type of work which was not welcome -- young people don't want to work. Less demanding job. Rather, they prefer the small, creative job. More interesting job. So to keep these young workers in the company, it is important to introduce the company way, the quality control, and to introduce the participative working system. These things are very important.

And these ideas, and these improvement of work structure was very helpful for the Japanese industries.

Q: From our perspective, as we see you from America, it seems as though everyone, every company in Japan is involved in quality improvement. In fact, how many companies are practicing quality methodology, relative to all of the companies in Japan?

KONDO: That's a difficult problem. I don't have the statistics. And also, in this connection, I myself do not like to discuss a difference between Japanese company and American company; or Japanese management and American management. Because in Japan, for example, there are good companies and good management and bad management. Variation is very big within the company.

Maybe the same in your country. As compared with the variation within company, the difference between the companies I think it's minor. It's not significant.

May I say another thing: I mentioned the participating work structure is very important. Second is, in Japan, professionalism is not established, as in the States. Well, maybe there are good things and bad things.

But, as Dr. Juran mentioned, in Japanese companies -- for example, quality assurance is not the responsibility of the quality assurance department. But the quality assurance is everyone's job, and everyone's responsibility. I think this idea also comes from the low or weak professionalism.

Q: What role do senior managers in Japan play? And what role have they played, over the years, in Japan's quality revolution?

KONDO: You are talking in good companies in Japan. Well, briefly said, it's a leadership. Well, the leadership is rather an upset concept, and it's difficult to explain. But, well, we believe that the top management has the responsibility to establish the quality policy. I mean, what kind of quality, product quality. Or what kind of quality of service should they offer to the customer.

And to improve the quality level, further to help us to introduce the company-wide quality control activities in the company. And they establish the annual plan of quality improvement, that's all. This is the very important leadership of the top management people.

And also, we Japanese like the PDC Cycle. What I talked is just a planning phase. The top leader, top management should check the result. And if it's necessary, they should

take the corrective actions, counter measures. On the side of top management. In this way, the PDC Cycle should rotate.

I think this is maybe the explanation of leadership of top management.

(OFF CAMERA DISCUSSION)

Q: Here in the Japan, and the good companies in particular, have had 40 years of experience in working with quality methodology. As you look back over these 40 years, which methods have proved to be most successful?

KONDO: Which method?

Q: What techniques, and what methods have proven to be not so successful so, as time has gone by, you don't do them any more, and maybe would not have done them again if you had a choice?

KONDO: Well, I want to say, not only the method, but also the concept itself is also very important. And I think we've learned a lot from Dr. Juran about the basic concept of quality control.

Well what we learned from him is the global view of quality; not the narrow Japanese view, of quality and quality control. I think the understanding of this concept is basically important. And in action to this method becomes more important.

Well, nowadays, there are new methods, new methodology, such as Taochi Method. I think it's not new, actually, but Quality Function Deployment, QFD. New Seven (?) Tools, and so on. But I myself think that most of

the problems, most of the quality problems can be solved by simple statistical method with a Seven Tool. You know, the Pareto Diagram, control chart, graph, scatter diagram, stratification, cost ... diagram, and so on.

So I think the wise, ... , utilization of this simple method will be helpful in the future, too.

Q: Are there things that, looking back, maybe you wish had been done differently than they were done?

KONDO: Pardon?

Q: As you look back at how quality was practiced within this quality revolution, do you wish that some of the those things, if you could change it, what do you wish would have been done differently than they were done? A different road taken.

KONDO: Meaning with knowledge at the present?

Q: Yes, looking back.

KONDO: Something can be changed, something improved? Well, I have no idea about it. Well, the improvement, or the progress is usually -- maybe always -- the trial and error. So I have no idea about it.

What we emphasize in Japan is a concept of PDCA Cycle. Plan, do, check, and ... cycle. Well, if we check the result and if it's not good, we can change it in the next cycle. If it is good, we can standardize it, and we can continue it. I think this is a very important process of improvement.

I think this idea is different from the do things right first time, this quick. I think this idea of do things right first time is, I think, rather dangerous. I feel it because no one knows what is right from the first. If we know the right thing from the first, everything is very easy.

But sometimes what we think right is wrong. So to improve the situation, we rotate PDCS cycle. So we learn the PDCs cycle from Dr. Deming and Dr. Juran, but we honestly followed this idea. So we don't do the things right from the first. This is a big difference.

Q: As time goes on, more companies become involved in quality methods. So more companies become good. In the next years, as more companies become good, what will distinguish them from the companies that are excellent in quality?

KONDO: In the future?

Q: Yes. Ten years out.

KONDO: Well, I think such a thing is happening already, especially in the Asian area. You know, Korea, China, Taiwan, and other countries in Asia are working very well, very hard. And the quality, product quality they offer is improving very rapidly.

For example: last year Phillips Taiwan won the Deming Prize. This is proof that they work very hard and their quality control activity is very high. And their product quality is very good.

I think these things will happen, many cases of this kind will happen in the future. Then, what should we do in

Japan? I don't know. Only to work harder. Or maybe work smarter.

Q: Before, you said there are good companies and there are bad companies.

KONDO: Vb hm.

Q: Soon there will be good companies and excellent companies. How, as you look at these companies, will you be able to know which of them is an excellent company? What things are they doing differently than just the good companies?

KONDO: Well, I think mentioned everything. But one important point is, in excellent companies, they think very much about the customer. Customer satisfaction, or customer-oriented concept is, I think, one of the most important points.

Well, Dr. Juran says -- doesn't say customers satisfaction. I think he says the fitness for use. I think this is same thing. Usually, customers -- if the quality is bad, customers complain. Not always, but sometimes, very often. But they say nothing about their own desire. The usual customer is silent always.

And if the manufacture developed very good product, or excellent product, customer says: this is what I wanted. So the companies should search for the silent desire of the customers. This investigation should be included in the concept of customer satisfaction. Not only to decrease the poor quality complaint, compensation, and so on.

Q: The search for quality is something like a journey.

KONDO: Uh hm, yes.

Q: And as you go on one part of the journey, it reveals other parts of the journey. In 40 years, Japan has taken a longer journey than we have in the United States. What things have you learned, at this latest part in your journey, that we in the United States will not get through for the next 20 years?

KONDO: Yes. The quality control activity suggests like a journey. And, well, this is not the quiet journey. But we have storms, everything. For example: the energy crisis in 1970' s gave us very big turbulence (?) and problems.

And also, the yen, Japanese yen becomes higher and higher after the energy crisis. These are -- maybe I can say these are the crisis dividing our journey.

The difference is to abandon our journey we had the crisis, or utilize these crisis to improve the companies' strengths. I think that's the difference. And I think, well, not all, but many Japanese companies could utilize these crisis very much.

Q: What have you learned that got your through one crisis? The second crisis, I believe, would be easier than the first crisis, because you've been through the first crisis --

KONDO: Yes.

Q: -- and learned that you can survive.

KONDO: Rotation PDC Cycle is very important concept. To learn the lessons from our experience in the crisis. And improve the company core.

Q: I know that you said earlier that you prefer not to compare the United States and Japan. And particularly at this time, when you read in your Japanese newspapers that they're not pleased with the United States, and in the United States papers, they're not always pleased with Japan. But, as a scholar who has studied, and not looking at the politics, what do you believe are the differences between quality in Japan and quality in the United States?

KONDO: Well -- I think this is one famous example, that -- yes. American motorcar company want to export the American cars to Japan. But 'til recently, American companies do not change the car, even though the traffic system is left side traffic in Japan. They don't change the steering wheel' from right to left. I think this is difference, typical difference, between your country and Japan.

Well, in order to export the product, we have to learn good. We have to -- yes -- learn many different things in foreign countries. Many Japanese companies have these difficult and precious experiences by exporting various goods. You know, the atmosphere concern (?) different. Dry. And here is wet.

And if you export something to Arab country, dust is a very big problem. And also the physical size of the customer is different. Many things are different.

I think Japanese learned many things in the last 30,40 years by exporting the product.

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Well, frankly saying, your country is not so much diligent
about this point.

(END OF TAPE NUMBER SIXTEEN)

