

My footsteps and proposal for the future (Volume 1)

Mr. Hisashi Amano

The Chairman of Asuka Industries, inc.

-You will be 94 years old this year. Could you look back on those days when you first started working?

I was still a child before the World War II, and did not know much about what happened but I do remember the chaotic days during the wartime were incomparable to what it is today. We got the peace and order of the society back after the war.

I started to help my family textile business in Mikawa Area, Aichi Prefecture after graduating from Tokyo University of Science. I had a busy time and went through a lot of difficulties while only the happy memories remaining since the bitter days faded away as the time passed by. Thinking of the fact that Japan has been in peace since the World War II, I am extremely grateful for the great era.

-What encouraged you to switch from the textile industry to the aluminum secondary alloy business?

Back to the year of 1955, the domestic production of aluminum was extremely low at that time. However, I felt the chemistry when I heard that aluminum would have a promising future.

It was lucky to witness the development exceed our prediction, and to be honest I never thought that it could achieve such tremendous growth.

Looking back on those days, the lack of confidence of the economy of Japan itself pushed us to be workaholic and contributed to the fast speed of growth.

-I think the concept of recycling was not popular at that time. What made the shift from textile to aluminum so smoothly?

In Mikawa Area there was an industry called "garabo", which produced new threads from used fibers at that time. I understood the importance of recycling from the experience of that and it helped me to make the switch.

-Did you go through a lot of difficulties at work?

I did not feel the hardship that I could not stand up again, and for many other industries suffered a lot while the aluminum industry was quite blessed. Compared to other industries, the need for ours has been increasing for a long time. Nowadays recycling is becoming increasingly important. I still feel it is an industry with growth potential.

--What are some of the most impressive events in the development of secondary aluminum alloys in Japan?

In the beginning, there was almost no domestic production of automobiles, and there was almost no supply of aluminum for automobiles. At that time, I never had the idea that the Japanese automobile would sell so well in the meantime, the automobile industry and other industries were all small companies. However, I remember that the supply of aluminum for the automobile industry exploded as the Japanese economy developed and automobile production grew. I also remember that the demand for aluminum sashes was rapidly increasing. However, looking back to the old days, the demand has not been uneven. My impression is that the company has continued to grow at a moderate pace during my tenure as president.

-We are going through an economic depression since the outbreak of Covid-19. How was the aluminum alloy industry like during the recession in the past?

We did experience oil crises, but compared to other industries, the impact was relatively negligible.

Although there was a move to withdraw from the domestic aluminum refining industry, there was never a time when we had to stop production.

In the long run, demand for secondary aluminum alloys has never been such that the industry has been driven to the corner.

Having experienced the turmoil of the war and the dramatic changes in the textile industry, I am convinced that the secondary aluminum alloy industry has been and will continue to be an industry with great potential for growth.

-When you look back on the withdrawal of the aluminum mining industry from Japan after the oil crisis, how did you feel at that time?

I think Japanese prefer the made in Japan quality since the wartime. However, the global trend was to manufacture products at lower cost, and in the long run we thought that could be a good thing. As a result, we were able to use stable and not expensive aluminum ingots as materials, and this led to the widespread use of aluminum for automobiles and construction. The secondary aluminum alloy industry of Japan has been able to be an important player in the world because of this.

-What do you see as important for the continued growth of the secondary aluminum alloy industry in the future?

First, the effort to price control is vital. In order to achieve this, it is necessary not to be afraid of hardships, but to think thoroughly. If you neglect to do so, you may face the time when you lose your job like other industries. We should not neglect our efforts and thinking deeply.

-With your patronage, we are pleased to celebrate the 20,000th issue of our Newspaper.

I would like to pay tribute to your paper for your great contribution to the industry. Looking back on the old days, people today might think it was a time of turmoil in the run-up to the war, but to me as a child it was a quieter time than it is now. On the other hand, it might have been because if you made any “noise”, you were likely to be arrested. Nowadays, we have the freedom to say whatever we want. We should not forget how grateful we are for that.

- Quotation from [The Japan Metal Bulletin 20,000th Special Issue] -