私が小さかった時には、転勤が多い生活でしたので、犬や猫を飼った事がありませんでした。私達が結婚をした時には、結婚式もせず、嫁入り道具もありませんでしたが、彼女が飼っていたカバ丸という老犬を一匹連れて来ました。それが、小椋家と犬との最初の出会いでした。その犬は、3年前に癌で亡くなりましたが、とても愛嬌があり、愛情深い子でした。彼からは、多くの事を与えられたと思います。もしかしたら、カバ丸が我が家に来た時から、将来アークで働くということが決まっていたのかもしれません。

現在、実家に犬が3匹と、私の家にはお馴染みのハロルドとシェリー、そして猫のウォーリー(おしっこが出にくい病気なので、小椋家で療養中)がいます。全てアークの子たちです。半年前に、以前ニュースレターでお知らせしました猫のシロが亡くなりました。その次に来たエイズの猫パッチも、わずか3ヶ月で亡くなりました。多くの動物と接する事が出来るという喜びがあると同時に、そう

いった子たちと死に別れなければならない悲 しさがあります。しかし、アークの仕事に携 わっていますと、毎日のように飼い主から見 捨てられたり、不当な虐待を受けている話を 聞かされます。残念ながら、アークでは全て の動物を引き取る事は出来ません。私達夫婦 に出来る事は、里親にもらわれる可能性がな く、病気などの理由で一生アークで過ごすし かない動物に、最後を飼い主の腕の中で迎え る事ができる場所を提供する事だと思ってい ます。私達の毎日は、ハロルドのアレルギー が良くなったと言っては喜び、ウォーリーの おしっこが出ないと言っては心配をする毎日 です。嫌がるのを何とかなだめて、2日に一 度の点滴を行ったり、ハロルドは全身アレル ギーですので、梅雨の時期など湿気が多い時 には、夜中に突然痒がって走り回ったりする ので、眠れない事もしばしばです。病気を持 った子は本当に手がかかりますが、彼らから それ以上に与えられるものが多くあります。 彼らは、不治の病であるにも関わらず、自暴 自棄になる事もなく、ふさぎ込む事もなく、 毎日私達に同じように愛情を与えてくれま す。暗く、根の深いペットを取り巻く日本の 実情を知れば知るほど遣る瀬無い気持ちにな りますが、何度も彼らの明るさに助けられて 来ました。

妻の朋子もアークのスタッフとしてアニマ ル・ケアの仕事をしていますが、私は事務所 で主にコンピュータの仕事(ニュースレター の作成やチラシ作り、イラスト、PRなど) を担当させて戴いています。直接動物に関わ る仕事ではありませんが、私のコンピュータ の隣には、ヘルニアで下半身不随のリサ、デ スクの下には怖がりのキム、足元にはベティ ーが餌のおこぼれを探してうろうろしていま す。毎日このような環境の中で仕事が出来る のは、私にとって何よりの喜びです。(コン ピュータの横にうんちが落ちていたり、喧し くて電話が聞こえない事もありますが)仕事 が終わって自宅に帰っても、また3匹の家族 がそれぞれの方法で出迎えてくれます。動物 保護という仕事をしながら、逆に動物たちに 慰められ、支えられて、つらく悲しく、楽し く嬉しい毎日を過ごす事が出来るのです。

おしっこが出にくいという深刻な問題を抱えているウォーリーの事が心配の種ですが、 当の本人は元気そのものです。家族全員元気 に暮らせている今は、私達にとって一番幸せ なときなのかもしれません。



My Family Satoshi Ogura, ARK Staff Member

My wife Tomoko and I started working at ARK a little over two and a half years ago. Every day here brings new surprises and infuriating incidents, so that time has passed very quickly.

When I was little, my family moved around a lot so I never had any cats or dogs. When we married, we didn't hold a wedding or receive any of the customary furniture and household items, but Tomoko brought her old dog, Kabamaru, with her to our house. That was the first encounter the Ogura family had with a dog. Kabamaru died of cancer three years ago, but while he lived he was a very cute and loving member of the family. There was so much he gave us. Maybe Kabamaru's coming to our house was a sign that one day, we would be working at ARK.

Today, my parents have three dogs at home, and Tomoko and I have Harold and Shelly, as well as a cat named Wally at our Yoshikawa home near ARK (Wally has an illness that makes it hard for him to urinate, so he's recuperating at our house). All of these animals came from ARK. Half a year

ago, as we announced in a previous newsletter, our cat Shiro died. Our next cat, Patch, had feline AIDS and died after just three months with us. So while we have the joy of sharing our lives with so many animals,

there is also the grief of losing them when they die. However, working at ARK we hear stories on a daily basis of animals who were abandoned or cruelly mistreated by their owners. Unfortunately, ARK cannot take in all of these animals.

What Tomoko and I can do, we believe, is to take in those animals who cannot hope to find new homes, animals who due to illness or some other reason can expect to spend the rest of their lives at ARK.

To these animals, we provide a home where they can breathe their last in our arms.

So our days are spent rejoicing when Harold's allergies seem to be better, and worrying when Wally has trouble urinating. Every two days we had to put an unwilling Shiro on an IV, while Harold's skin allergies mean we can scarcely get a good night's sleep, especially during the humid rainy season when his itching makes him start running all over the house. Animals with physical ailments require a lot of extra care, but what we get back from them is so much more than we give. Although they suffer from incur-

able diseases, they don't despair or close in on themselves, but continue to give us the same love day after day.

The more I learn about the depressing, deep-rooted situation of pets in Japan, the more wretched and hopeless I feel. And yet their cheerfulness and good nature have helped me countless times.

Tomoko also cares for the animals at ARK as a staff member, but my duties are in the office, primarily on the computer, where I prepare the newsletter, fliers, illustrations, PR and so on. Although my work at ARK doesn't put me directly in touch with all the animals here, next to my computer is Lisa, whose hindquarters are paralyzed from a hernia, while cowardly Kim lies under the desk. And Betty is always underfoot, looking for any food that might have dropped on the floor. Being able to work in such an environment is one of my favorite things about being at ARK (although there is also the downside: finding poop on the floor next to the desk, being unable to hear what someone's saying on the phone from all the noise...).

And then, when we finish work and go home, Harold, Shelly and Wally all welcome us back, each in his own way. So although my work is called animal welfare, many times it works the opposite way, with me being cheered up and supported by animals, and thanks to them every day is a rich mixture of hardship and sadness, fun and joy.

We have a lot of anxiety on account of poor Wally, but Wally himself is the picture of good spirits. Now, when all our family can live together like this, are the happiest days of our lives.