

# **Waseda University April 1, 2022 Entrance ceremony**

## **Congratulatory Address**

**Miwa Fukuhara,  
Recipient of the Award for Distinguished Service to Sports**

**Congratulations to everyone on your enrolment to Waseda University!  
I'm sure you've had a very difficult time with the spread of the new coronavirus, but now I can congratulate you on entering Waseda with great hope.**

**As you already know, I am Miwa Fukuhara. It is a great honour to receive the Award for Distinguished Service in Sports, especially on this stage during your Entrance Ceremony.**

**Today, you are becoming a member of Waseda, and the university's basic philosophy is the "enterprising spirit." I'm sure you're all very familiar with the term "enterprising." It means "to willingly tackle something difficult."**

**Actually, I am the first woman to receive the Award for Distinguished Service in Sports. Although I have not faced any particular difficulties, as a woman, I think that in my own way I have been able to contribute to the development of figure skating in Japan today.**

**In fact, my maternal grandfather was also a Waseda graduate. In 1905, my grandfather was a member of the Waseda University baseball team, the first Japanese sports team to tour the USA. Any other professional or amateur sport teams in Japan had not toured USA before.**

**This was the time of the Russo-Japanese War, and naturally, everyone was against the idea of going abroad to play baseball at a time of war.**

**At that time, Founder of Waseda University Shigenobu Okuma persuaded the surrounding people with these words. ‘Students have their own way to go. Young people should go abroad to broaden their horizons. No matter how difficult it is, they must carry this through.’**

**The baseball equipment and knowledge the team brought back from the USA from this trip was generously shared with other universities. It is said that this helped Japanese baseball to make great strides.**

**Incidentally, Waseda had enjoyed exchanges with the University of Chicago. The uniform for this U.S. trip was modelled on the uniform of the University of Chicago, comprised of “a maroon undershirt and stockings.” This is said to be the origin of Waseda's school colours.**

**Also, when my grandfather was in his fourth year, there was a game between the Waseda baseball team and selected players from the American Major League. President Okuma was selected to throw the first ball. He took the mound wearing the traditional Japanese clothing of the haori and hakama. It was my grandfather who was standing at the plate, watching for that first pitch! Well, President Okuma threw the ball hard, but unfortunately it was a wild pitch. My grandfather thought that the University President should pitch a strike, so he swung his bat, and that made it a strike. From then on, it became customary for the number one hitter to swing at any pitch in honour of this first pitch.**

**Although this is a story from my grandfather's time, I believe that the episode is full of the enterprising spirit and generosity that is typical of Waseda, where people willingly take on tasks at their own initiative.**

**I would now like to talk a little about myself and figure skating. As in my introduction, yes, I have spent many years in the figure skating world. I first started figure skating when I was about eight years old, when my mother took me to the skating rink.**

**With practice, one by one, I learned various techniques. I honed my skills and started competing in national as well as international competitions.**

**As I competed against aspiring athletes from abroad, I began to dream of competing in the Olympics. I followed this dream and skated really hard, and in 1964, the year after I entered Waseda University, I was able to represent Japan at the Innsbruck Winter Olympics, where I finished in fifth place. At that time, the figure skating world was so Western-centric that it would be unthinkable today. Asians were under the unfavorable condition, so I was really lucky to score so high. Even under these circumstances, I was never discouraged, and practiced as hard as I could. I went to the Olympic Games with the determination to do the very best I could. I believed in myself, in my skills and abilities.**

**Since then, Japanese figure skating has made great progress. As you all know, at the Turin Winter Olympics in 2006, Shizuka Arakawa became the first Asian to win a gold medal in figure skating. Later, Yuzuru Hanyu won two straight gold medals, and became the hope of the next generation.**

**In figure skating, we now have two Olympic gold medallists, and both are Waseda University graduates.**

**After retiring from amateur skating, I myself became the first Japanese to participate in overseas ice shows, and I was able to make friends all over the world while travelling to many countries. I then became an instructor in Japan, and since 1995, I have been in charge of the figure skating division of the Waseda University ice skating team. As an instructor and mentor, I live for my daily contact with talented young people.**

**The global situation is currently unstable. It seems that the COVID-19 pandemic is still likely to continue for some time. Yet even in these trying times, I would like to encourage all of you to find your own dreams, and to work as hard as you can to make your dreams come true. Waseda University, where you are all enrolled, has a wonderful tradition and future aspirations.**

**You will experience many exciting encounters, and feel much joy, in your everyday university life. You will also face many difficulties and barriers. Enjoy your student life and find goals and dreams that you can devote**

**yourself to and want to achieve.**

**Waseda University has a tradition of an enterprising spirit that will nurture your great potential.**

**It is my hope that you will find and seize the opportunities to lead a wonderful life for yourselves during your upcoming university years.**

**Once again, congratulations to you all on your enrolment today.**

**I pray that the next four years will be a wonderful time of growth and achievement for all of you.**

**Thank you very much for listening to my speech today.**