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Yesterday When I Was Young

In 1969 I began working for a *yobiya*¹, what in English we call an impresario. I had just turned 23 and was in my last year at university. It was an opportunity to use Japanese and English in a profession other than teaching, which was one attraction because in those early days about the only work available to a young foreigner like myself was teaching English conversation. An even greater attraction was being able to meet and work with world-famous singers and musicians. It also meant being able to travel around Japan for concerts.

Of the many artists with whom I worked, I think the French singer Charles Aznavour was my favorite. He was truly a gentleman and very easy to work with. His voice was truly amazing and even though I did not understand French, I never tired of listening to his songs. He was of course also fluent in English and one of the songs he always sang was *Yesterday When I Was Young*². Recently I happened to find a recording on YouTube of this song and the lyrics³ are much more meaningful for me today than when I first heard Charles sing them 50 years ago.

The lyrics are about self-reflection, about looking back on one's youth and realizing how foolish we can be at times when we are young because we are so idealistic and often filled with the belief that we can do anything. So we dream big dreams not realizing how quickly time goes by and, as the lyrics go, "I never stopped to think what life was all about".

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus I've pretty much stayed at home. I tend to pass the time reading, watching TV (mostly news), programs I have prerecorded, and just thinking. Often my thinking turns towards reflecting on the past and inevitably I find myself sometimes wondering how life might have turned out if I had made choices other than the ones I did. No doubt advanced age is a factor, but also, I think, is the uncertainty of the future. It will be quite a while, if ever, before life returns to how it was before the pandemic.

The days seem much longer and as I mentioned earlier I find myself with much more time on my hands. Often something I see or hear will trigger a thought or a memory, such as the song I mentioned above. I think it is making me more and more nostalgic.

¹ 海外の芸能人などと交渉して国内での興行を契約するのを職業とする人の俗称。

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEjoVg07rIE>

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<https://www.google.com/search?q=yesterday+when+i+was+young&og=yesterdaywh&ags=chrome.1.69i57j0l7.5209j0i8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>