

“Boomer Avenue”



This was my first dream of the new year of 2008. It is my fervent hope that this dream is prophetic.

On a certain day during the decade 2030-2039, an elderly gentleman sits dozing in front of his computer. The very comfortable living room is brightly lit by the sunlight streaming through the trees on the virtual screen set in the wall of the house. This gentleman is a member of the so-called “baby boomer” generation, and he prides himself on the central role that his generation had continued to play in Japan’s economic development. However, one by one his friends have all passed away, and inevitably his generation’s influence on society has declined as that role has passed to the younger generation. Now, however, he has considerable time on his hands, and so recently he started a blog entitled “Boomer Avenue” in which he writes down his recollections.

He’s asleep right now, so let’s take a peek at the computer screen to see what he has written.

(Date: _____)

Today I have a deep sense of satisfaction. What makes me so content this morning is that the Project to Develop Technologies for the Manufacture of Next-Generation Devices that Fuse Different Fields (BEANS Project; 2008 - 2012) that we all began in 2008 was a resounding success. The success of the project spurred individual companies to move ahead with the marketing of specific BEANS (Bio Electro-mechanical Autonomous Nano Systems) devices. As a result, BEANS is everywhere around us, a part of our everyday lives.

For instance, there is a BEANS “spacecraft” (an advanced endoscope capsule) right inside my own body. Each day, it patrols my body and works to prevent illness. I can tell it where and how to patrol, but that’s too much trouble, so I have it on autopilot. Today I have the feeling it’s somewhere around my large intestine. It’s like the parasite-like thing often seen when I was young that had the side benefit of almost completely eliminating my allergic constitution. This, too, makes me happy. Many people use these BEANS “spacecraft” to maintain their health. This has greatly reduced health care costs for the nation as a whole, helping to improve our financial health as well.

The “spacecraft” has just issued a warning message that it’s almost out of gas. I guess I’ll have to refuel it with an evening drink of that special “Bean-Scent” Japanese premium sake that I was finally able to get.

(Date: _____)

Today I’ll continue with my thoughts about BEANS. Last time I wrote about the BEANS “spacecraft” that lives in my body. But BEANS are present in the outer world as well. They play a major role in maintaining the air and water and other aspects of the global environment. Today I’ll talk about water.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the economies of China and India grew at an astonishing pace. However, both countries experienced serious water problems, which has been a limiting factor for further economic development. Also in Japan, water is insufficient in the Shikoku region and northern Kyushu region almost every summer. Although there is a practically limitless quantity of seawater covering the surface of the earth, there was a dramatic insufficiency of fresh water suitable for use as drinking water and water for industrial production. In recent years, however, BEANS for turning seawater into freshwater have appeared, and these promise to become our salvation in terms of resolving the problem of insufficient water. These tiny freshwater conversion BEANS, which look like peas, will be spread like gravel on the filtration equipment. The BEANS have a three-dimensional nanostructure that incorporates biological membranes. This structure enables them to efficiently filter large quantities of seawater. Individual homes will be able to filter the next day’s drinking water at night while the occupants sleep. Moreover, the sea salt that is a byproduct of the filtration process is absolutely delicious. Supposedly it goes very well with the flavor of (real) boiled beans.

There seems to be no limit to the memories of this elderly gentleman concerning BEANS. After all, the achievement of Innovation 25 – the societal goal at the time – was given a great boost by the practical application of BEANS. This explains his great sense of satisfaction.

We were on the point of leaving, not wanting to disturb his pleasant sleep, when we glanced at the computer screen once more and this time saw an image on the screen. The “thought switch” was left on, and so it appeared that we were looking at the dream he was having at that moment. It was extremely interesting. The basic content of the dream was as follows.

Jack planted beans (Internet BEANS) in a field. Instantly, the beans sprouted into a tree that grew high into the sky. Jack climbed the tree, up into the clouds, and discovered a towering pile of “knowledge” - the crown jewels of human knowledge. Amidst this knowledge, he discovered MEMS Peadia (a database of MEMS-related knowledge). For some reason, Jack was deeply moved. Looking around, he saw the same type of bean plants sprouting out all over the place, and these began to connect up with one another. And they began to come in contact with clumps of knowledge everywhere. Through the BEANS network that the Internet had evolved, “knowledge” gushed from springs like water and spread to every corner of the earth.

The dream of this elderly gentleman may very well be prophetic. Speaking for myself, I plan to buy some Internet BEANS and secretly plant them in my garden. Hopefully, I will soon be able to take a stroll in the heavens.