

The Imperial Family

On 10 April 1959, Crown Prince Akihito married Miss Michiko Sho-da, daughter of a distinguished businessman. Dr. Shinzo Koizumi, who supervised the Crown Prince's education for many years, said of this marriage: "The Crown Prince chose her, and so did we." In accordance with the Imperial House Law, the Imperial House Council, headed by the Prime Minister, gave its unanimous consent to the marriage. The whole nation was enchanted by the traditional wedding ceremony and the splendid open horse-drawn carriage procession that followed. Over 500,000 people gathered on the streets to celebrate this occasion. It was one of the happiest days in the history of post-war Japan.

Crown Prince Akihito, with warm and devoted support from Crown Princess Michiko, pursued His official duties with renewed vigour, faithfully observing the time-honored Imperial traditions and, at the same time, opening up new areas of activity befitting the role of the Crown Prince in the modern era.

The Crown Prince and Crown Princess established a happy family with Their three children, Prince Naruhito, Prince Fumihito and Princess Sayako. They decided to keep the children by Their side, breaking away from tradition. In spite of Her busy life, the Crown Princess Herself gave them loving care. She breast-fed all of them, and when the children reached school age, She prepared their lunch-boxes every morning. Later, She said about Her approach to child-raising: "I have consulted the Emperor (then the Crown Prince) on every matter and I am grateful to Him for the precious advice He gave me, based on His own experiences. They were most helpful to me."

As the Emperor mentioned at one of His press conferences, the Empress has always shown love and respect for His relatives, above all His parents. Emperor Showa and Empress Kojun received much joy from the regular visits of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess and Their children. Upon the demise of Emperor Showa, Empress Michiko, together with Emperor Akihito, continued to visit Empress Kojun almost every weekend, until Empress Kojun passed away on 16 June 2000.

Their Majesties take early morning walks almost every day in the Palace woods and gardens where They observe the changes of the seasons and enjoy nature, which They are both very fond of. On weekends, when Their schedule permits, They play tennis, Their favorite sport.



Crown Prince Akihito and Crown Princess Michiko with Their three children; Prince Naruhito, Prince Fumihito and Princess Sayako. (September 1969)



The Imperial Family enjoys a moment in the garden of the Crown Prince's Residence. (April 1977)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, on the occasion of Their 50th wedding anniversary, hold tea at the Imperial Palace for couples who are also celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. (April 2009)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko listen to a performance by the Imperial Guard music band with the public at the Imperial Palace, on the occasion of Their 50th wedding anniversary. (April 2009)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko with the Imperial Family. (December 2011)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko harvest land-rice with members of the Imperial Family. (September 2013)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko take a walk and admire the *Hemerocallis citrine* blooming in the garden of the Imperial Residence. (July 2013)



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko take a walk in the Forest of Nasu Heisei-no-mori (July 2013)



Emperor Akihito enjoy rowing a traditional Japanese boat with Empress Michiko and other members of the Imperial Family. (September 2009)