

Empress Michiko - personal history

Empress Michiko was born in Tokyo on 20 October 1934 as the first daughter of Hidesaburo and Fumiko Shoda. The Sho-da family is prominent in both industrial and academic circles, counting among its members two recipients of the Order of Culture, the highest order given to scholars and artists by the Emperor. On learning of the Crown Prince's choice of Miss Sho-da as His bride, the nation expressed delight and admiration for the family's modest and dignified way of life.

Miss Shoda attended Futaba Elementary School. She had to leave the school when She was in the fourth grade, as the ravages of war made living in Tokyo difficult. She returned to Tokyo to graduate from Her old school after the war ended. She then attended Sacred Heart High School in Tokyo and entered the Department of English Literature at the University of the Sacred Heart. In Her senior year, She was elected president of the student government. Many of Her classmates recall that, though reserved, She won the trust of Her fellow students and helped to enhance the harmonious spirit of the school. At Her graduation ceremony in 1957 She was valedictorian.

As Crown Princess, She met with people from various fields and deepened Her understanding of problems existing in society. In Her modest and self-effacing manner, She was once heard to say that, as a member of the Imperial Family, She would like to remain a person who follows with concern what is happening in society, keeping the people and their needs close to Her heart and constantly praying for their well-being.



Miss Michiko Sho-da at the age of 6, dressed up for Her *Shichi-Go-San*, traditional celebration for children in their 3rd, 5th and 7th year. (November 1940)