



Lessons from a Tsunami: Ken LeCroix Recounts His Experience in Japan

By: Wendy Hart Beckman

"I make sure I'm prepared for anything," says Kenjiro ("Ken") LeCroix, a 2011 graduate of the College of Law. At the time, he was referring to earthquake preparation — but he could just as well have been referring to his approach to life.

When it comes to earthquakes, LeCroix knows what good preparation looks like — and



what poor preparation looks like. Although a Cincinnati by birth, LeCroix's family moved to Caracas, Venezuela, and then to Kobe, Japan, during his childhood. He lived in Japan from the age of seven until returning to Ohio at the age of 15.

In fact, during his time in Kobe, he experienced the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. He describes that experience as "eye opening."

Skip forward 16 years, and young law student Kenjiro LeCroix has just returned from lunch on March 11, 2011; it's 2:16 p.m. in Tokyo. Suddenly the ground starts to shake. "It only lasted about two to three minutes, but it felt like 30," LeCroix says. The only damage his apartment withstood was a few broken cologne bottles.

Then, he says, "it got interesting." As the ramifications of his situation began to sink in, questions began to pop into his head: "Am I going to be able to remain in Japan?" "Will I be able to continue working in Japan?" "What will happen to my law school classes?" "Will I be able to graduate on time?"

It was still the middle of the night back in Cincinnati. "Right around 6 or 6:30 that evening, when it was 5 or 5:30 a.m. here in Cincinnati, I decided that it would be nice to give my mother a ring and let her know that I was all right,"

LeCroix says. "I woke her up."

LeCroix laughs, and says his mother might not appreciate being reminded, but she asked him, "What do you want?" "I told her, 'When you watch the news after you wake up, I just wanted you to know that I am OK,'" he says. "She said, 'That's all?' and I said, 'Yup!' and she hung up. An hour later she called me back: 'ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?'" He laughs now, but he doesn't dismiss what his mother must have felt. He was just thinking ahead. He's made a habit of preparing himself for anything.

Perhaps there was one time he was not prepared, he admits. Subsequent to living abroad for 10 years, LeCroix returned to Ohio and enrolled at Cincinnati's St. Xavier High School, not knowing that it was an all-boys' school. "On the first day, I noticed there were no females walking around," he says, laughing. "I decided that girls must get the first day off."

After graduating from St. X in 2003, LeCroix set out to prepare himself for his life ahead. He entered Vanderbilt University as a triple major in Math, Spanish and Chemistry. While forging his way through academics, he also started to rack up corporate experience, completing internships during every summer.

All the while, he was tweaking and adjusting his academic goals in response to his internship experiences. Upon graduation, he joined Tetra Pak, a food processing and packaging solutions company, in their Tokyo office, where he discovered two things he was passionate about: language and law.

“I really used my language skills there, both Japanese and Spanish,” he says. He also enjoyed the opportunity to work with legal documents. “So when I returned to the United States, I took the LSAT.” After returning to the U.S. and prior to enrolling at UC Law, LeCroix worked as an interpreter for the medical, legal, and business sectors and also gained experience working for Toyota, returning two years later to work as an intern in their legal department.

From there, LeCroix says, his life took off, including work for GE Aviation’s legal group and for Judge Arthur Spiegel of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio. At this point, attorneys at GE Aviation suggested that LeCroix spend some time in Japan in the Corporate Legal Group for GE’s Tokyo office. Thus, after undergoing the interview process (including a separate interview to test his bilingual ability), LeCroix was hired. He then had to apply for a school in Japan. Temple University has a law school campus in Japan, so once they accepted him and he received a post-graduation offer from his law firm, Faruki Ireland & Cox, to join their Cincinnati office as a business litigation associate, LeCroix was all set.



So that day at 2:16 p.m., as the room shook around him and questions rocked his mental world, the final question that whirled in his mind was, “What about my job?” All of LeCroix’s preparations were tightly timed, aimed at putting him in his full-time job after graduation. But sometimes Mother Nature does not cooperate. Luckily — although it probably was not just luck — LeCroix was able to finish his classes

on time, complete his internship with GE, and successfully graduated.

LeCroix noted that preparing for the unexpected is challenging. “You don’t expect a 20-meter-high tsunami.” Those are the images that LeCroix will have trouble wiping from his memory. Overall, however, the experience gave him a deeper appreciation for crisis management. “How you deal with a crisis, as an individual or as an organization, is one sign of how well you are going to succeed in life,” he says. “You start wondering, ‘How would I handle it?’ You hope that when the circumstances call for it, you could make a difference.”

Alum Publishes Book on Watergate Burglar and CIA’s Assassin-Spy...his Uncle

Jim Hunt '74 and writing partner Bob Risch of Sanibel, FL, have published the story of a real life James Bond — Frank Sturgis, best known as one of the Watergate burglars. He led a “double life” as an agent for the CIA. In the book entitled *Warrior: Frank Sturgis the CIA’s #1 Assassin-Spy who nearly Killed Castro but was ambushed by Watergate*, the authors share the life story of the man Fidel Castro called “the most dangerous CIA agent.”

Sturgis was a member of the famed Edson’s Raiders carved from the Marines in 1942. When he should have been at this high school prom, he was carrying on guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines at Guadalcanal. He eventually served in all branches of the US military before joining Castro in the mountains of Cuba in an effort to oust the dictator Batista. He was a captain in the Cuban revolutionary army and Chief of Air Force security for which he temporarily lost his US citizenship. Sturgis befriended Fidel Castro and Che Guevara and was instrumental in the revolution’s success, passing on his guerilla warriors’ expertise to Guevara. Castro put Sturgis in charge of Cuba’s casinos but the promised freedoms didn’t materialize; so, he began spying for the CIA, eventually ex-filtrating back to the US and carrying on an off-the-radar war against Castro. Sturgis trained many of the brigade that invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. He sat in his plane waiting to join the battle when JFK issued the stand down order, a decision for which Sturgis never forgave him. Incidentally, this action eventually led to the FBI’s investigation of Sturgis relative to the assassination of the President.

An interesting character, Sturgis used more than 30 aliases and code names, trained guerilla armies in 12 countries on three continents, and spearheaded assassination plots to overthrow governments, including those of Cuba, Panama, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. The authors interviewed many historical figures and present what many may consider to be the most definitive piece on Watergate to date. The book can be purchased on Amazon.com.

