

# Afterword

by Yukari Oe



IN THE HIGHLANDS of North Karuizawa where we have spent our summers every year, there is a broad slope where wild flowers of all sorts bloom in great profusion: scabious, vetch, day lilies, and so on; and, being fond of flowers, I began making sketches of them with colored pencils when I was still quite young. Having watched me at this for many years, my husband suggested I do some drawings to illustrate the text of what eventually became *A Healing Family*.

These essays about our family life—for him, a rather rare

way of treating the subject—were first serialized in a quarterly magazine called *Sawarabi*, which has a medical focus. But though my husband welcomed the project as a chance to write about something connected with and of interest to the medical profession from the standpoint of the patient's family, I was initially reluctant. I thought it would be more than I could manage. When I was told that all they needed were some sketches of flowers and "snapshots" of the family, however, I set to work. That was over five years ago.

Recently, the Oes have had more than their share of big events: my mother's second hospitalization, the release of Hikari's second CD, concerts in that connection, our first trip abroad with Hikari in the wake of a rather severe seizure, the filming of an NHK documentary about us, and, of course, my husband's prize. The upshot of all this excitement, for me, was that I had almost no time to paint. Needless to say, I am a complete amateur, but it bothered me that I couldn't do more than a handful of second-rate sketches. Still, the people from the magazine were encouraging.

These sketches bring back some vivid memories: of drawing bean bags and paper balloons by my mother's hospital bed, for example, or of being shut in by the rain at our hotel in Salzburg, spending the whole day doing drawings of wild flowers in a cup while Hikari, who hadn't had a chance to write any music for a while, sat nearby, bent over his score. At one time, during our summers in the country, he had merely played at being a composer, just as I played at being an illustrator. Now, however, he had become the real

thing, whereas I still seemed to be . . . well, playing at it. Never mind—I am glad at least I can make some contribution to this picture of our family life.

