

STOCKTONSpeaks!

ROXANNE KOMURE

Within a young Japanese woman's journey to adulthood, the culture does not offer one specific ritual that marks the moment she leaves her childhood behind. The voyage seems to be riddled with many experiences that all culminate in becoming an adult. Roxanne Komure is no exception to the rule. While there is not one significant event that causes Roxanne to feel like an adult yet, she predicts that the sum of all the experiences that have helped her grow and mature will amount to her becoming what she dearly wants to be—a responsible and independent adult.

Roxanne was born in Stockton, California on July 28, 1982. Four generations earlier, her Komure ancestors left Japan to immigrate to the United States in the first part of the 1900s. Her father's side of the family came to California. When moving to the U.S., her mother's forebears originally settled in Hawaii. In 1968, her maternal grandparents brought their family to California. Roxanne grew up in an English-speaking household, where both parents provide financially for the family. Her father works in commercial farming and her mother is a social worker, specializing in adoption services.

In her youth, Roxanne's parents were fairly strict. Roxanne is the eldest of four children and became a role model for her three younger sisters. She particularly recalls being a freshman in high school and having to stay home rather than attend social functions with her friends. These days—as with so many families—the rules have changed a bit. Roxanne's younger sisters are allowed to go shopping or to the movies with their friends on a regular basis.

Typically in the U.S., turning 18 years old is associated with acquiring social and legal rights, such as voting. Americans tend to view an 18-year-old as legally mature enough to take care of himself or herself. But, when Roxanne reached 18, she still didn't feel as though a significant life change had taken place. She was still in high school, still living in her parents' house, still receiving money from her parents.

Graduation from high school was, instead, a stepping stone towards adulthood.

Like her father before her, Roxanne was accepted into the prestigious

University of California at Davis. Going away to school and living on her own finally gave her more independence.

And yet, though she had more freedom, Roxanne says that she *still* didn't feel like an adult.

The next milestone in Roxanne's life was turning 21. The birthday came and went, again without any significant change in the way she felt. Roxanne believes that she feels childish still, in part, because she continues to receive a lot of financial support from her parents. They help with college tuition and her monthly bills. However, when she graduates, she will be completely on her own. Roxanne predicts that graduating from college will be a very happy memory. Even though her parents expect her to be very successful in life and support her choices, Roxanne will have to pay her own way through graduate school if she decides to continue her formal education—a decision she will get to make on her own.

Growing up, Roxanne's goals were to obtain a college degree and secure a job. After she has taken these steps, she plans to get married and have children. Roxanne wants both a career and a family. Laughingly, she states that the marriage part won't be for a while. As for her parent's expectations, they tended to fall in line with what Roxanne has always wanted for herself. Roxanne was raised to believe in setting goals and following through. She was instructed in her youth to always try her hardest and not to give up.

"My parents taught me morals and values at a young age," Roxanne is proud to say. This has helped her with a lot of life situations. "The values I was taught," she states, "have helped me in school, job situations, and relationships with others."

Since her family has been in the United States for several generations, she feels very much assimilated into American society. However, her parents have instilled some very traditional values in her. They expect respect and may be stricter than other parents she has met. But this has made her the focused person that she is today. Roxanne is also very determined to raise her children with the same values, morals, and traditions that her parents taught her. She recognizes the benefit to her life and is determined to keep the culture alive through her children.

"I also learned a great deal at church as a child." During her upbringing her family attended a small Japanese/Asian Christian church. This allowed Roxanne to learn about God with people all sharing a common background, something important

to her.

Roxanne predominantly identifies with fellow Japanese Americans. Although she grew up in America among many Caucasians, she participates in traditional Japanese events. She makes mochi (pounded rice confections) during New Year's and belongs to the Japanese American Citizens League. However, Roxanne also states that she doesn't always identify with this group because she has lots of friends in other ethnic groups.

She sometimes feels that fewer and fewer families are raising their children to remember the culture and to carry it forward. This is the reason Roxanne feels that she should do her part to ensure that the traditions and culture of her Japanese heritage are preserved and passed on.

Roxanne's grandmother is someone who is teaching her some of these traditions. Her grandmother continues to advise her about the decisions that she must face. One such decision involves marriage. Grandmother would prefer that Roxanne marry a "nice Japanese boy." Roxanne never realized how much these beliefs have influenced her own actions and attitudes—but she holds the ultimate respect for her family and their desire to play an influential role in her life. And, although she has dated boys of non-Japanese descent, she is currently dating a young Japanese American.

Roxanne was raised in the city and speaks some Japanese that she learned from courses at school, rather than at home. She is sensitive to the way in which some people loosely use the term "oriental." Roxanne feels that she is an American, plain and simple. While she is of Japanese descent, she and her family have been in America longer than many people who never have to deal with being treated differently at all. Why is it, she wonders, that although she is a fourth generation American (or "yonsei," in Japanese generational nomenclature), she is still considered a *Japanese* rather than *American* of Japanese descent?

Whatever her ethnicity, Roxanne is a determined young woman. She is following in the footsteps of her father by attending UC Davis and also her mother, by becoming a social worker. She tries her hardest to please her family because they have made great sacrifices to put her through college. Being the eldest daughter, Roxanne also serves as an example for her younger sisters. She will be graduating from her university this year. Her favorite memory so far has been

graduating high school, because it made her family so proud.

This next graduation from UC Davis will be an event that marks the start of independence. It will end her stint as a child and begin another...the journey into adulthood.

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Generation: Youth