



"Lately I've been worried..."

This is "The Dog's Year."
I am 72 years old.
So this is my year.
I was 60 years old when I
had my last dog's year.

Ask me not whether I
can meet another dog
who will wait for me
in this world or another.
For this is decided
by a Power unknown.

SHOZO USAMI
New Year's Day 2006

If the Japanese/Chinese zodiac chart at right were pushed back to the 19th century, it would show that Yoshi's dear father, 1895, was born as a Sheep/Ram, just as I was, just as our daughter, 1967, was. Yoshi, 1936, a Rat who would rather be a Mouse, is surrounded by Rams and/or Sheep.

Happy Dog Year

By JACKSON SELLERS

It's a bunch of superstitious nonsense, but it certainly has been going on a long time, ever since the 6th century A.D. in Japan. A calendrical system developed in China arranges the years into a repeating cycle of 12, with each year in the cycle symbolized by a different animal. Supposedly, a person has the traits of the animal representing the year in which he or she was born. In some cases, there is leeway in deciding what that animal is. For example, I was born in 1931, the Year of the Sheep. *Hitsuji* means sheep, lamb, goat or ram. I choose Ram. Masa, 1926, has no image problem with Tiger. Nor does Jim, 1925, a sturdy Ox. Bill, 1933, is a Rooster, but an Eagle flies higher. Sorry, Shozo, a child of 1934. An *inu* is a Dog, only a Dog, and can never be a Wolf.

Rat	1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996
Ox	1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997
Tiger	1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998
Rabbit	1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999
Dragon	1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000
Snake	1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001
Horse	1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002
Sheep	1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003
Monkey	1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004
Rooster	1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005
Dog	1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006
Boar	1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007



Masahiro Endou, a Tokyo calligrapher who often works for the Imperial Household, has done seven ideographic pieces for me. At left is his "Year of the Rooster" calligraphy. The artwork takes its inspiration from the ideograph that represents a rooster. At right, I rotated the ideograph 90° counterclockwise to align it with the art.

