

YKK Episodes

Expanding around the World
– Memorable Stories –

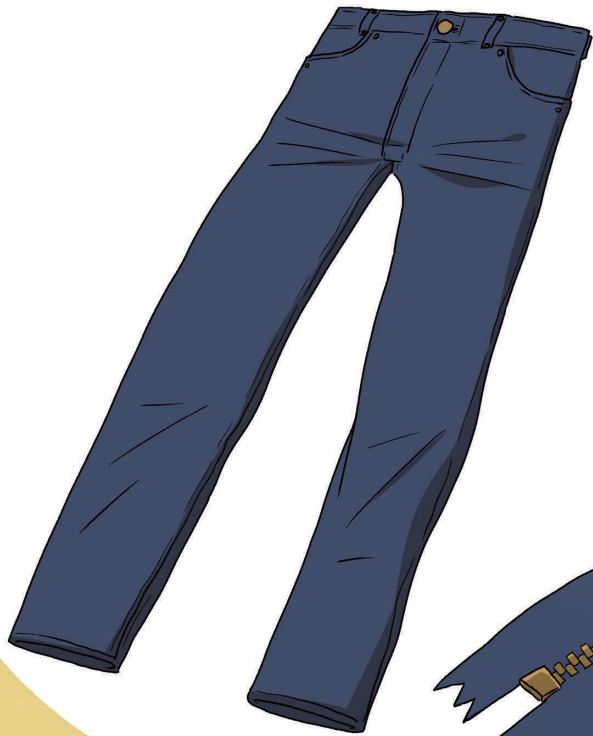


Episode 7 Challenge (Part 1)

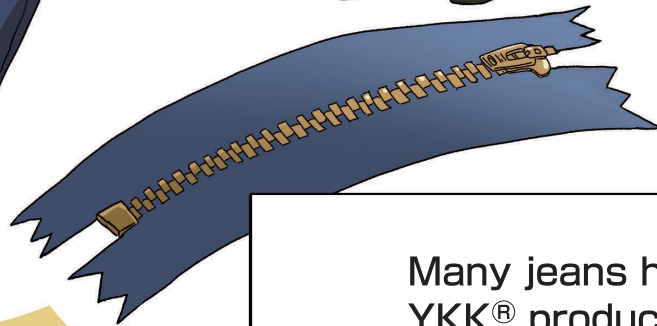


Production/ad-manga.com

Jeans continue to be popular with people in the USA.



Many jeans have YKK® products.



And there was a lot of effort put in behind the scenes to achieve that...

YKK established a sales office in the USA in 1960.

※Production began in New York in 1964.

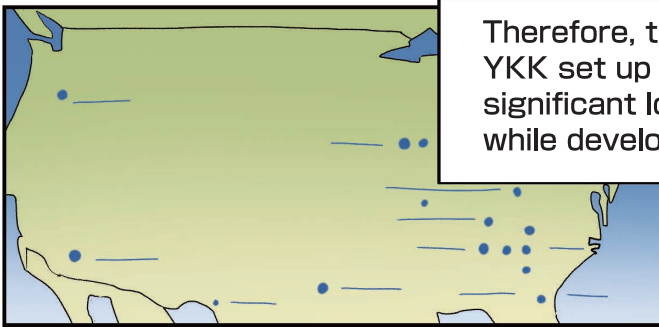
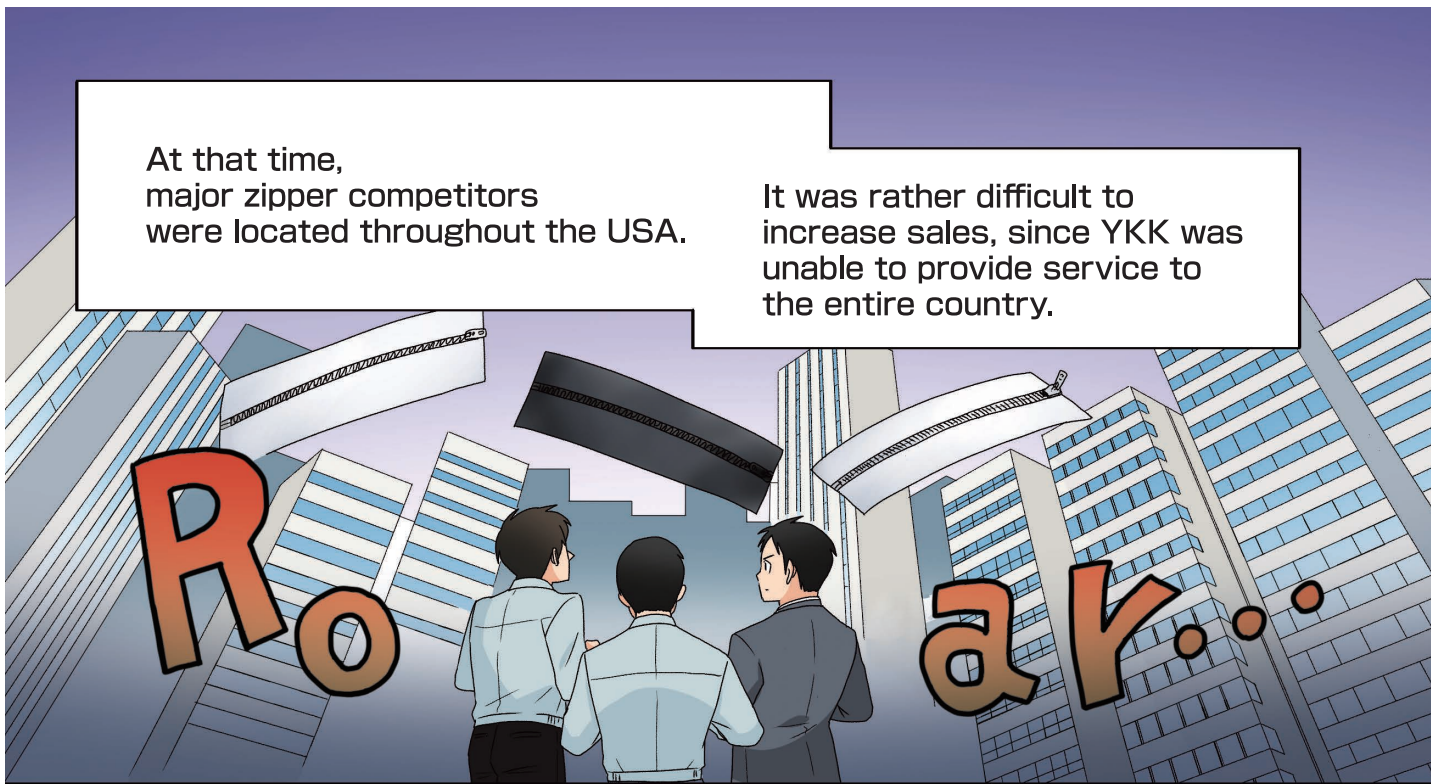
Let's take any order, no matter how small!



YKK was meeting customers' needs with service unrivaled by competitors, but was limited by a lack of local production.

At that time,
major zipper competitors
were located throughout the USA.

It was rather difficult to
increase sales, since YKK was
unable to provide service to
the entire country.



Therefore, to improve its sales network,
YKK set up sales branches at
significant locations,
while developing assembly plants for service.

Little by little, sales grew.



10 years after entering
the US market...

YKK zippers had been adopted for
use in women's clothing and boots,
assembly plants in each region had expanded, and
YKK had steadily built up the trust of its customers.

But the company relied on
imports from Japan
for some major materials and parts.

Furthermore,
foreign exchange risks increased
as a result of the Nixon Shock...

We're importing
from Kurobe...

Hmm, what
should we do...



In the midst of such adversity, Mr. L rose to action for the construction of an integrated manufacturing plant in the USA.

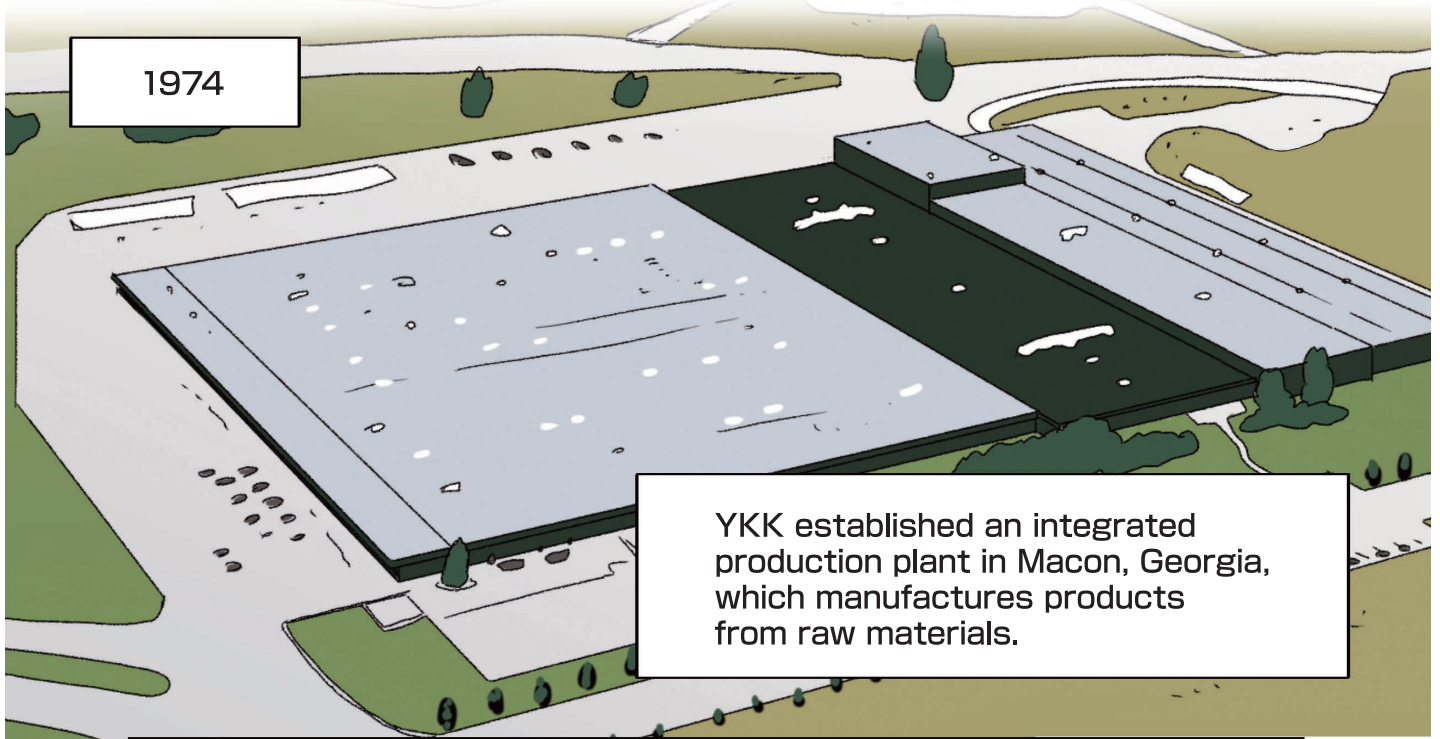
We won't lose to competitors! Catch up, then surpass them!



cle nch

Mr.L (42 yrs.)

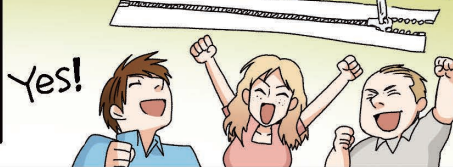
1974



YKK established an integrated production plant in Macon, Georgia, which manufactures products from raw materials.

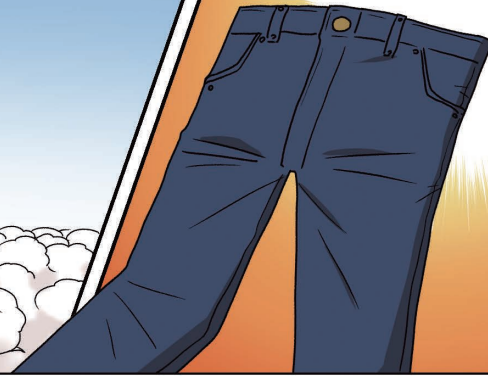
As a result, it became possible to mass produce products in a short turnaround time, without relying on imports from Japan.

Made in USA



Soon,
YKK began going after
the jeans zippers market.

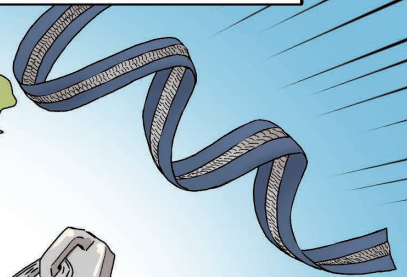
Because of the proximity of cotton producing areas, sewing factories of major jeans brands were concentrated in the southern part of the U.S.



Therefore, in order to increase sales, YKK's southern branch had to try to cultivate the jeans market, which was quite broad.

USA's business model was different from that of Japan.

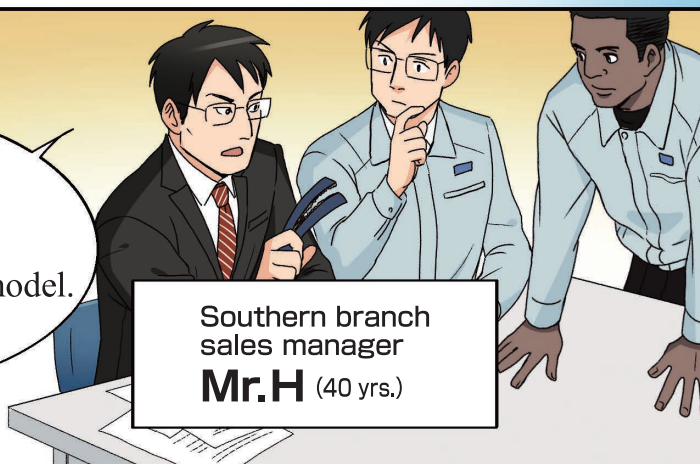
At that time, although fully completed zippers were being delivered in Japan,



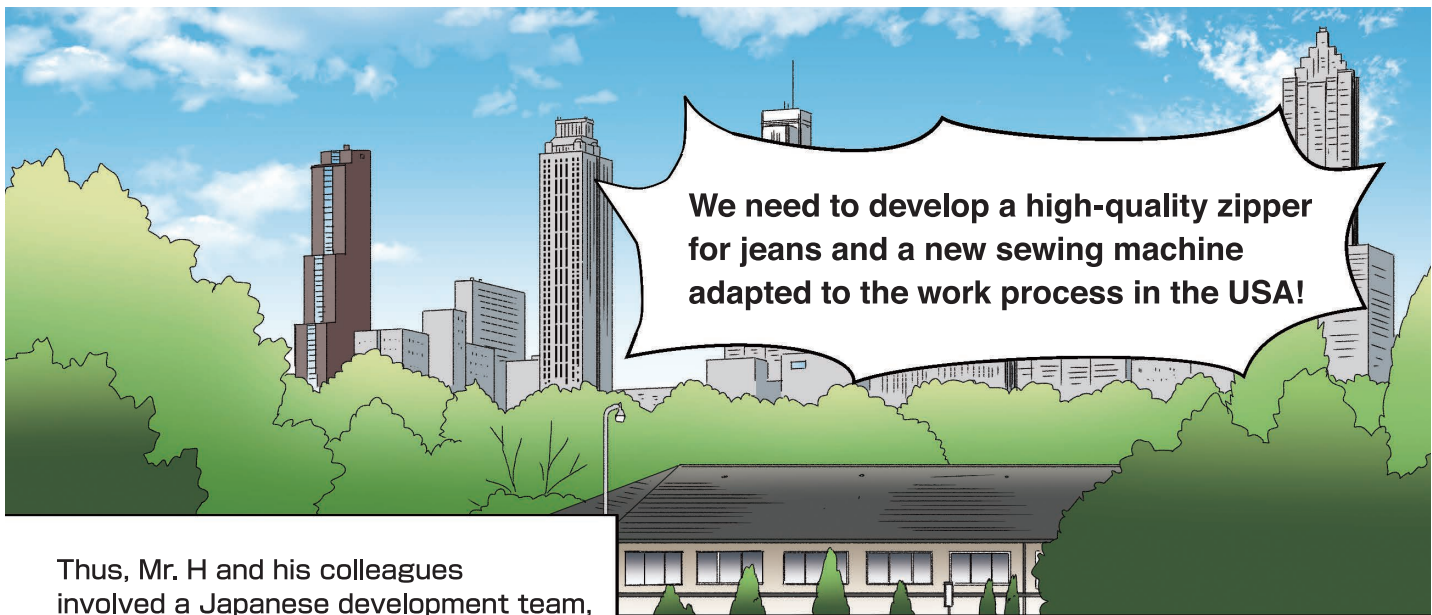
Logistics were not as developed as they are now, and since the USA is very large, zipper parts were delivered separately, and the final assembly was handled by the customer using semiautomatic machines.

We're selling excellent quality chains and sliders now, but...

We need to use the American business model.



Southern branch sales manager
Mr.H (40 yrs.)



We need to develop a high-quality zipper for jeans and a new sewing machine adapted to the work process in the USA!

Thus, Mr. H and his colleagues involved a Japanese development team, along with American engineers and sales staff...

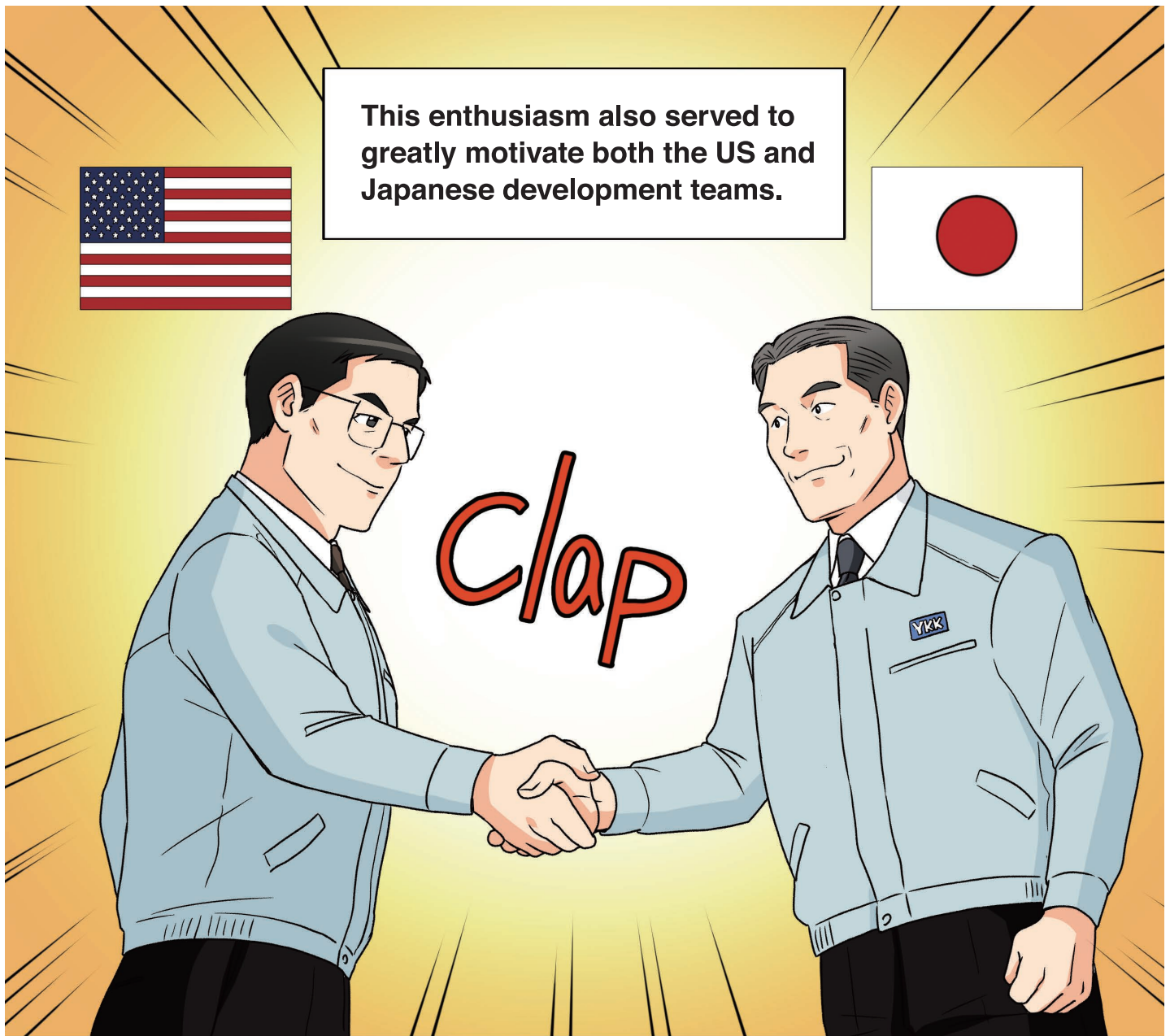


...and began working to develop a machine to produce high-quality zippers for jeans and shorten the work process for customers.

Meanwhile, as the manager of the Macon factory, Mr. L repeatedly reminded American staff that "Eliminating small waste brings about great profits."



In order for the Macon factory to operate at its fullest, YKK USA needed to work as a united body to capture the vast jeans market.



It seemed that YKK's challenge to the jeans market was going well...

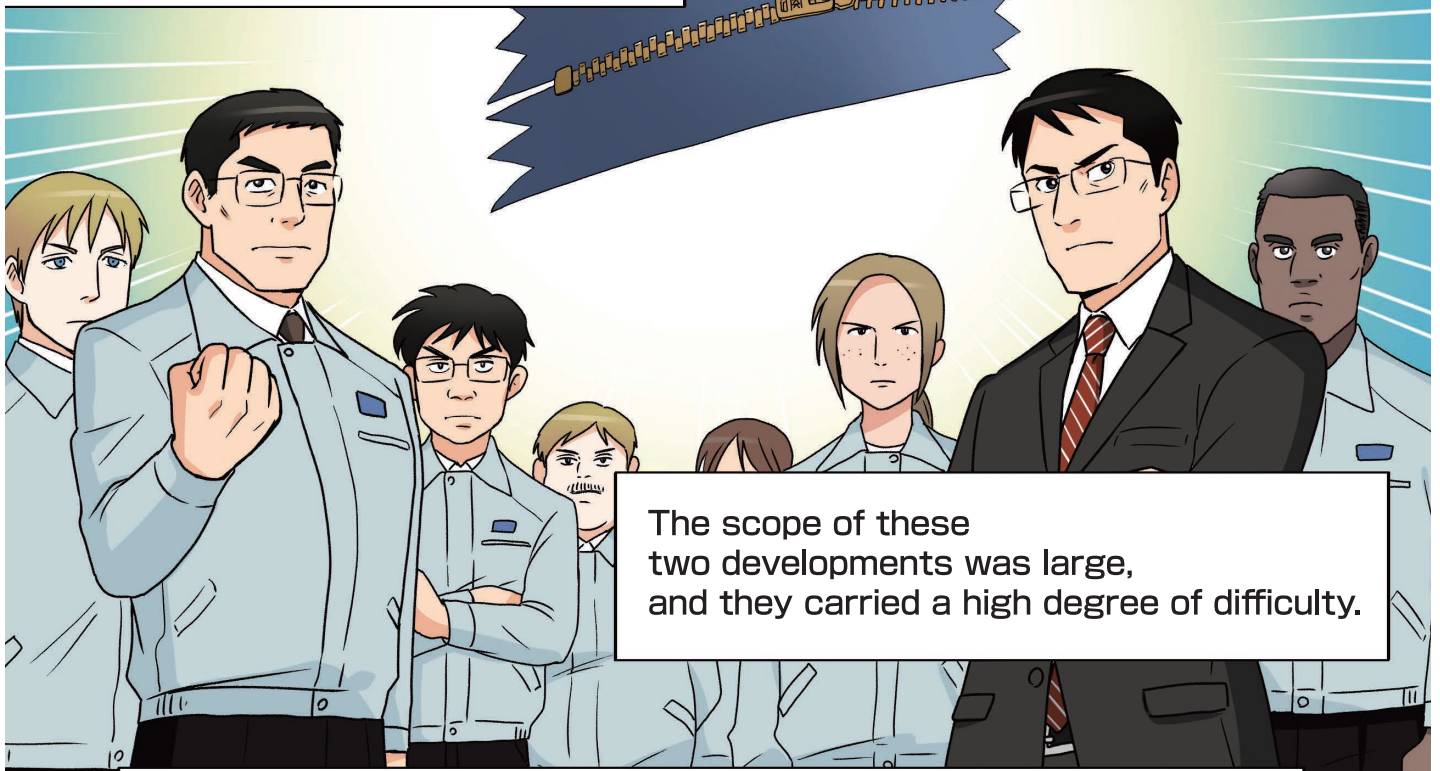
But in reality, things were tough...

Jeans zippers needed to be both strong and easy to use, as there were few jeans zippers that could tolerate being handled roughly.



YKK's competitors also produced decent quality products and had built a long-standing relationship of trust with their customers.

Even under these circumstances, YKK outshined other companies in quality, and its products were adopted at local sewing factories.



The scope of these two developments was large, and they carried a high degree of difficulty.

**From this point on,
all YKK employees will be put to the test.**

To be continued in Part 2