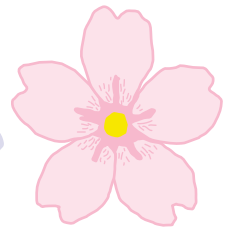


JLGC Newsletter



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SPECIAL REPORT

Welcome Back Miss Miyagi! Returning Home after 76 Years

by Masashi Takahashi
Assistant Director of JLGC

It was a typical January day in New York City, bright, clear and quite cold. My Deputy Director, Mieko Sato, and I

were about to embark on a fascinating journey westward to Larned, Kansas to meet a special elderly woman with a fascination for dolls, antique dolls to be precise.

Her name is Margaret R. Corbet, and she is an owner of the "Friendship Dolls". These special dolls were exchanged as tokens of friendship between Japan and the United States over 70 years ago.

This was our first experience to visit Kansas, and I was quite surprised at how similar the topography was to my home prefecture, Miyagi-ken. I gazed upon a diverse landscape comprised of flatlands, mountain ranges, rivers and endless fields of livestock. It reminded me of home, and it struck me as coincidental that I would soon be face to face with a woman who lived most of her life in Kansas with scenery similar to Miyagi.

Ms. Corbet greeted us with a wide smile and a warm

heart. Her antique shop contained a large assortment of merchandise, accumulated over many years, such as pottery, buttons, stamps, lacquer ware and fine linens that were purchased at auction. My curiosity got the best of me and I asked her; why did you decide to operate an antique shop? She responded: "It is my great pleasure to locate items people are interested in and have been searching for. I have been acquiring old items according to my taste while following the trends and relying on inspiration – but my experience living in Gifu-ken, Japan in 1947 rekindled my collection of Japanese artifacts."

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Miss Miyagi Friendship Doll

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Masthead: The sakura, or cherry blossom, is Japan's cherished national flower. Special hanami parties and excursions are held during blossom time each year.



Welcome Back Miss Miyagi! Returning Home after 76 Years

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She related the following story. At an auction in 1982, Ms. Corbet saw a Miss Miyagi friendship doll. There was no background history on the doll but she was determined to obtain one and visited a local library to research the dolls' identity.

She discovered that they were "Friendship Dolls" which were given as gifts to American children to thank them for their thoughtfulness and message of peace. Previously, American children in a spirit of friendship raised money to buy dolls, later to be called "Blue-eyed Dolls" and sent them to Japan where they were enthusiastically received.

Ms. Corbet was determined to return to Japan and visit Miyagi-ken with a Miss Miyagi doll. She felt it would be a chance for Miss Miyagi to return home after 76 years and help bridge cultural relations between Japan and the United States.

Boldly she wrote to Shiro Asano, Governor of Miyagi Prefecture to inform him of her visit. With the assistance of Ms. Toshiko Saito and Ms. Tomoko Shizukuishi, organizers of the "Blue-eyed Doll Study Group" her letter was accepted and they prepared to host her visit.



The author, Masashi Takahashi (right), presents an Honorary Associate Award from Miyagi Prefecture to Ms. Margaret R. Corbet (center) and her daughter, Dody Corbet (left) with Miss Miyagi.

In May 2003, Ms. Corbet, her daughter Dody Corbet and Miss Miyagi embarked on their trip to Miyagi-ken, Japan to fulfill a dream. In Miyagi-ken, Miss Miyagi was displayed during the week of May 21-25

at the Sendai Historical Museum in the capital city of Sendai. The doll visited the Miyagi Prefecture Government offices and several elementary schools. It was a wonderful opportunity to share the story of the Friendship Dolls, further mutual understanding and promote internationalization at the grass roots level.

Ms. Corbet continues to actively promote the story of the Friendship Dolls, teaching American children about Miss Miyagi. In 2000, she sent two new Blue-eyed Dolls to Monou and Uwamura elementary schools in Miyagi. "I enjoy showing Miss Miyagi to American school children and I enjoy showing my dolls to Japanese children."

As an acknowledgement of her outstanding contribution toward bridging cultures and furthering internationalization between Miyagi and the United States, Governor Asano decided to bestow her with an Honorary Associate Award. As the representative from Miyagi in the United States,

WHAT ARE THE FRIENDSHIP DOLLS?

The Friendship Dolls were not merely presents but kinds of messenger of peace from American children. Dr. Sidney Gulick was the main person who believed American and Japanese children could learn to understand one another by giving the Friendship Dolls. The American children donated their own money and raised funds to buy a total of 12,739 dolls. The

Friendship Dolls, named as "Blue-eyed Dolls" by Japanese children, were welcomed in Japan with great parades and parties. Lots of Japanese people thought writing thank-you letters would not be enough to reciprocate the American gesture so 58 Japanese dolls were sent to United States as gifts in return which include Miss Miyagi. During World War

II, Japan's army ordered that American dolls be destroyed but it's been said that many Japanese people hid dolls in their homes and fields.

After World War II, more than 300 "Blue-eyed Dolls" have been found all across the Japan and eight of them have been preserved in Miyagi Prefecture.

I was given the opportunity to meet her and present the award. It was a memorable event and an experience I shall never forget.

She graciously accepted the Award and remarked: "While living in Japan in 1947, I nurtured a growing interest in Japanese culture. I am very glad to receive this special award from Governor Asano and I shall make every effort to continue to help promote internationalization between us forever."

Reference;

American Girl, March/April 1997, pages 28-31.

Look Japan, July 1995, pages 30-33.

Friendship Dolls Their "mission of friendship" continues
<http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/dolls/index.htm>

Report of the Miyagi Blue-eyed Doll Study Group.



Ms. Corbet's antique shop, "Antiques And Artifacts" in Kansas.

PREFECTURE TODAY

Nara Prefecture

Nara prefecture is situated at the heart of the Kii Peninsula on the main island of Honshu and three-fourths of the prefecture is actually mountains. It is an inland prefecture without coastline, surrounded by Osaka Prefecture, Kyoto Prefecture, Wakayama Prefecture and Mie Prefecture. One of the most famous ancient cities in the world, Nara used to be an eastern terminal point of Silk Road about 1,300 years ago. As the first capital of Japan, Nara flourished with cultural interchanges between Japan and the Orient. Nara also has a deep connection with the Emperor's family.

Nara is home to numerous historic and cultural sites. Two of Japan's eleven World Cultural Heritage Sites are located in Nara. One is "Buddhist Structures in the Horyuji Temple" area and was registered by UNESCO in 1993. The buildings in the area were built around 700 A.D.,

and Horyuji Temple at the center of this area is famous as the oldest wooden building in the world. Another World Cultural Heritage Site in Nara is "Historic Assets of Ancient Nara" which includes Todaiji Temple and Heijyokyo Palace Site, and was registered by UNESCO in 1998. This historic area has been restored and preserved to what it used to be about 1,300 years ago. In addition, the mountainous southern part of Nara Prefecture is recognized as

the birthplace of many religious faiths that are still practiced today. This region can be called "Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in Kii Mountain Range" and is

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Todaiji Temple silhouetted against a full moon.

Nara Prefecture

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expected to be registered as another World Cultural Heritage Site of Japan in 2004. Besides these areas, there are many other historic and cultural sites to visit in Nara.

Nara is also rich in nature. In the north, seasonal changes are often complemented with historical cultural events, highlighting the magnificent natural beauty of the area. In March, the *ume* (Japanese plum) trees bloom in Tsukigase in the northern part of Nara and is the centerpiece to a celebration for the ending of winter. The blooming *sakura* (cherry blossoms) and accompanying festivals in April in Yoshino region in the middle of Nara is a sign of spring's arrival. Near the end of year, the brilliant autumn leaves mark the advent of

winter in Tonomine also in the middle of Nara. In the southern part of the

prefecture, the steep geographical features of the mountains and the great volume of water from being

waterfalls, valleys and ravines. There are also many hidden hot springs where it was said that historical celebrities

visited. Nara also has a sanctuary for wild birds and one of the few habitats for plants and animals indigenous to Japan including *nihonkamoshika* (Japanese serow), wild deer, and *tukinowaguma* (Japanese bear).

Due to the abundant natural resources, agriculture and forestry are popular industries in Nara Prefecture. Nara is also famous for Yamato Tea, Japanese persimmon, *ayu* (sweetfish), and Japanese cedars.

For further information, please see the Nara Prefecture Government web site: <http://www.pref.nara.jp/>



“Historic Assets of Ancient Nara” include Todaiji Temple as part of World Cultural Historic Sites.

the rainiest area in Japan have formed characteristic natural scenery such as

Source: Nara Prefecture Tourist Association.

Kitakyushu City

An International Gateway with Local Flair

Kitakyushu was founded in February 1963 as the unprecedented merger of five cities: Moji, Kokura, Tobata, Yahata and Wakamatsu, each with its own long history and traditions. Located on the northern tip of Kyushu in western Japan, Kitakyushu is midway between Tokyo and Shanghai, 600 miles away from both cities, and only about 125 miles from the most southern part of Korea Peninsula. The city has thrived as a gateway for trade with Asia for many years and also developed as one of the major industrial cities in Japan. Today, Kitakyushu has a population of one million and an area of 120 acres rich in waterfronts and greenery, with a warm and friendly atmosphere.

Kitakyushu has implemented a wide variety of projects to guide it towards becoming an international city of technology. One of the main projects is international cooperation. Kitakyushu had experienced severe pollution during its major economic growth as an industrial city. The public and private sectors worked together to create partnerships and technologies to overcome the pollution problem and these are now being applied to international cooperation projects. The city has also accepted more than 3,000 trainees from developing countries to further promote international cooperation.

Another unique project is “Kitakyushu’s Eco-Town” project. The Eco-Town project is aimed toward becoming a society that recycles more and produces less waste. In July 1997, Kitakyushu was designated as one of the first eco-town areas by the national government.



Kokura Castle, located at the center of Kitakyushu, is a symbol of the old-time Japan

Kitakyushu is rejuvenating the local economy through expanded international exchange with US and Canada as well as Asian countries. The Kitakyushu International Association (KIA) presents exchange activities for Japanese and non-Japanese residents around the city to deepen mutual understanding and friendship and to promote world peace. It provides necessary information on daily living, cultural opportunities such as homestays, foreign language seminars, lectures and cultural events for those living in Kitakyushu. KIA aims to create a place where everybody feels comfortable and appreciates a peaceful global atmosphere.

Kitakyushu International Week is held ever year in early October under the theme, “The World is a Global Family.” During International Week, a myriad of events promoting international awareness and grassroots

exchange are held at the International Village Center in Yahatahigashi Ward and at various locales in Kitakyushu.

Another international event is the Kitakyushu International Music Festival with chamber music as its main feature. It was inaugurated in 1988 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the City of Kitakyushu. The outstanding concerts, played by top-level artists from Japan and abroad, are held every weekend for three weeks and attract many music lovers to the city every year.

Kitakyushu can provide you with various opportunities so come and see for yourself what Kitakyushu City has to offer.

For more information and background, see the Kitakyushu city web-site:
<http://www.city.kitakyushu.jp/~english/>



CLAIR Short-Term International Study Program 2003 (CLAIR Kokusai Jyuku)



Important things I learned from “Please help yourself” and “NIMBY”

by Toshiko Mitsui

Participating in the CLAIR Short-Term International Study Program 2003 (CLAIR Kokusai Jyuku) gave me the valuable opportunity to study not only the United States local government system, but also the differences between our two cultures. I had been to the U.S. three times prior to this program and did not expect to discover anything new. The program had also arranged staying with three different host families where I gained new insights that were contrary to my expectations. It truly made the experience extremely fruitful and rewarding. Although there is much to tell about what I learned about local and state government, I would like to focus on what I should keep in mind culturally when attempting to promote internationalization.

The two phrases and concepts of: “Please help yourself” and “NIMBY” (Not in my back yard) struck me as particularly important features of American culture.

The phrase “Please help yourself” had such a strong impression on me because it was the most frequently heard phrase whenever I changed host families. As a guest, I tried to be as good as I possibly could; I tried not to bother my hosts, ate everything that was served, tried to involve myself in various conversations and did not request anything even if I needed something or wanted something to be done. In



The author, Toshiko Mitsui (right), with her Host mother and her cat.

addition, it was my understanding that a guest should not step into private areas such as the kitchen so I did not open the refrigerator nor ask for the beverages in it. Believe it or not, in Japan we seldom hear the expression, “Please help yourself” especially if you are a guest or visitor in someone’s house. This difference in hospitality was a major cultural gap for me. At first, I took these words as “Please do not bother me” so I felt rather unwelcome. However, as time went by, I realized that this phrase meant “Please make yourself at home and let me know if there is anything you need.” Later, when talking to other program participants about their host families, I found out that many of them had similar experiences. It took time for us to understand the real meaning of what our host families were saying, and we almost misunderstood the host families’ true hospitality.

I learned from this experience that in order to avoid misunderstanding others, especially those from different cultural backgrounds, the most important thing to

Itinerary of the CLAIR Short-Term International Study Program 2003

August 22	Travel to New York.
August 22-26	Opening session and orientation at Japan Local Government Center in New York
August 27	Travel to Alexandria, VA
-September 21	All-day language training (Stay in a hotel)
September 22	All-day language training 3 days a week /
-October 10	Meetings and site visits in Washington D.C. area rest of a week (Stay with a host family)
October 11-17	Meetings on state government (Group I: Austin, TX Group II Atlanta, GA) (Staying in a hotel)
October 18-24	Meetings on municipal government (Group I: Seattle, WA Group II Boulder, CO) (Staying in a hotel)
October 25	Individual Internships (2-week internship in municipal government(s))
-November 7	(Stay with a host family: I stayed with 3 host families)
November 8	Independent travel (I went Cleveland, OH and Boston, MA) (Staying in a hotel)
- November 16	(meetings with municipal government(s) or organization about own theme)
November 17	Closing session at Japan Local Government Center in New York
November 18	Travel to Japan

do is talk with one another and ask questions when faced with things that are difficult to understand. I learned that simply talking together was the most important step in truly understanding each other.

The first time I heard the phrase “NIMBY” (Not in my back yard) was during an interview about public transportation with local government officials. The officials explained that on one occasion when a new subway station was to be built, it was difficult to for residents of the area to reach a consensus because of the attitude of “NIMBY”. The idea behind it was “Expanding the railway system was a good idea, but not if the new train station was going to be built in my neighborhood.” It was very surprising to hear citizens or groups of citizens express such

strong opinions against public interest. The strong will and power citizens possess to express their beliefs can often move administration to action, but it can also cause friction as well. At first, I could not understand why people said, “NIMBY”, but after being reminded that American citizens are from all over the world, with each of them having different ideas, economic situations, beliefs and cultural backgrounds, I realized

the difficulties that must be faced when trying to reach a general consensus or agreement. One of the local government officials that I interviewed told me, “To find the best answer, we spend a lot of time researching the influences of different projects as well as listening to and talking with various groups of citizens. Although it takes a long time, we believe this process brings the best and most well received

to the public. In the future, this should be a more open process in order to better meet with public’s interests. Personally, as a local government employee, this was one of the most valuable points I discovered and I will endeavor to keep it in mind for the future.

These experiences made me rethink my own attitude towards work. As a local government official dealing with internationalization, I have been too focused trying to complete projects and their various aspects just to accomplish the task at hand. First, I need to work on training myself to investigate projects with different points of view. Second, I should try harder to help more people reach beyond set boundaries while avoiding misunderstandings. Finally, I

also need to keep in mind that my job is for the public’s benefit and therefore, I should not neglect to listen to the opinions of others even if they tend to sound negative at first.

The time I spent in the U.S. taught me so much. I sincerely hope that next year’s participants will have a similarly rewarding experience.



Halloween pumpkin carving with local town people.

results for the citizens.” This comment reminded me that, as a government employee, I should also consider various ideas and points of view when I work. I was a little embarrassed for taking this “NIMBY” stance as just a selfish comment from the citizens. In Japan, we are used to government administration making decisions through a process that, when compared to America’s, tends to be more closed

2003 Local Autonomy Forum Focuses on Emergency Preparedness

The 2003 U.S.-Japan Local Autonomy Forum, held on November 13th & 14th at the offices of the Japan External Trade Organization in Midtown Manhattan, took “Emergency Preparedness and Local Government” as its theme. These forums brings together experts from the U.S. and Japan to discuss a wide range of topics relating to the various challenges faced by local governments in both countries. This was the sixth annual forum whose topics have included decentralization in Japan compared with federalism in the U.S., taxation, freedom of information, urban revitalization, and public/private partnerships.

Thursday, November 13th, had opening remarks and the two keynote speeches. This year’s first keynote speaker was Professor Howard Kunreuther, from the University of Pennsylvania. He spoke on forms of

public/private partnership in managing risk, including factors to take into account when designing incentive and enforcement structures to compel private sector entities to prepare for and attempt to mitigate potential disasters. Professor Hideaki Shiroyama from Tokyo University, on behalf of Associate Professor Masato Abe also from Tokyo University, gave the second keynote speech. Professor Abe addressed the topic of government’s role in establishing a risk management system, giving a broader analytical description of public and private sector players. Professor Abe also focused on how risk is perceived by different parties and on government’s pivotal, almost managerial, role in addressing issues of risk. In contrast, Professor Kunreuther gave a more nuts and bolts description of possible measures to be taken, focusing on specific policies and strategies that could be used to



Opening Speech by Naofumi Hida, Director of JLGC.

motivate stakeholders to more effectively manage their risks.

A buffet reception was held in the evening, giving participants a chance to talk with one another in a more relaxed setting. Friendships, some created and some renewed, provided a backdrop to wide-ranging conversations about politics and life in the participants’ home communities, helping to put professional discussions of emergency management in clearer contexts.

Friday’s session was a panel discussion on case studies in emergency management, moderated by Professor Shiroyama. The first speaker was Mr. Norihiko Yagi, Senior Director of Reconstruction Planning for the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, who talked about the city’s new Disaster



Buffet Reception on the opening day of the 2003 U.S.-Japan Local Autonomy Forum.

Prevention Division and efforts to prepare for and respond to emergency situations such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and possible terrorist attacks. Next, Mr. Masaru Matsumoto, Manager of the Commercial Risks Department for Tokyo Marine and Fire Insurance, spoke about seismic risk management for enterprises. This includes working to evaluate potential earthquake-related risks, estimating their attendant costs, and then formulating countermeasures such as investing in earthquake-proof construction or establishing business continuity plans. The third speaker was

developing relationships among emergency managers and responders prior to any major event. Drawing on his experience and perspective gained in the wake of the September 11th attacks and other major disaster response situations for the city, he used many firsthand examples to illustrate how crucial well-developed lines of communication are in responding effectively to any emergency situation. The last speaker was Dr. Frank Straub, Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety for the City of White Plains, who first outlined the measures his city had taken to enhance their

tive communications built on strong relationships among city officials and with the community. After each panelist made a short presentation, they discussed some points among themselves and invited members of the audience to ask questions.



Panel discussion on case studies in emergency management.

Mr. Bradford Billet, OBE, Deputy Commissioner in the Office of the Mayor for the City of New York, who discussed the importance of comprehensive preparation for a wide range of potential emergencies. One important aspect of this preparation is

preparedness and then related how this paid off in responding to the August 2003 blackout. He emphasized the need to prepare and practice response plans, establish a coordinated incident command structure, train public safety personnel, and develop effec-



Keynote speaker Professor Howard Kunreuther from the University of Pennsylvania.

The two days of presentations and discussion were invaluable in bringing together a broad range of people from academia, local government, and the private sector both from Japan and the U.S. to exchange information and provoke serious consideration of how best to prepare for and respond to emergency situations. The greatest benefit will come, however, from continued communication and cooperation among the participants, as they work to improve their emergency management capabilities on behalf of their communities.

Communicating with “Origami”

by Yujiro Toi
Assistant Director of JLGC

Nashville, Tennessee, the home of country western music was the venue for the 2003 Congress of Cities, the annual conference of the National League of Cities, which took place December 9-12, 2003. The Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) participated as an exhibitor showcasing our programs and services and introducing the various activities of Japanese local governments to over 5,000 municipal government officials.

After my arrival to America in April 2003, I attended the United States Conference of Mayors Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado where I learned about the business of being an American mayor. However, manning an exhibitor’s booth and trying to explain what I had learned was daunting. Although I had been in the United States for a short time, I had many chances to experience firsthand American hospitality and friendliness so I felt good about trying. I was a bit apprehensive mainly because of my limited English language ability and I felt I had little to offer the guests that stopped at our booth to inquire about our organization or wanted to chat about their experiences in Japan. I had some difficulty engaging in conversation let alone answer questions about our exhibit. I started to feel the frustration creeping in.

Then I remembered how much I



A JLGC staff demonstrates Origami at annual conference of the National League of Cities.

enjoyed the simple things. I am a pretty fair paper folder and always had a fondness for making “origami” (Japanese art of folding paper into decorative shapes and figures). The crane is my specialty, so I started making paper cranes of all sizes and colors. Within the next couple of hours I made over one hundred different cranes and people were stopping by to watch and ask for instruction. I was surprised and delighted by their interest and their willingness to construct a paper crane along with me. When I made a paper crane for an elderly lady and presented it to her, she was delighted and hugged me. My confidence grew. As I instructed young and old in the art of origami I was amazed at how easy it

became for me to communicate with them. Origami transformed me into a communicator. It was a great feeling to know that I did indeed have something to contribute. I never thought that origami could be an effective communication tool, but I began to think that maybe I had more dormant talents that could entertain people.

One of the reasons for coming to the United States was to learn not only about American people and their culture, but also to learn about ourselves. I am still working on improving my English language ability, but now I have the added boost of self assurance attained while making and talking about origami.

The Story of Sadako

Have you ever heard the story of “Sadako Sasaki”? For the citizens of Hiroshima City, they are constantly reminded of her story whenever they see paper cranes.

She was born in Hiroshima City on January 7, 1943 and was only two years old when the atom bomb struck on August 6, 1945. At home with her family in Kusunoki-cho, only 1.7 kilometers (1.06 miles) from the center of the blast, she was exposed to the fallout.

At first, there were no apparent injuries and she was healthy and gifted athletically. Although a little thin, weighing 27 kilograms (59.5 lb.), she stood 135 centimeters tall (4.43 ft.) and exuded vigor. She especially enjoyed running and ran the 50 meters (164 ft.) in 7.5 seconds. She never lost a race. As a result of her ability and success she was chosen to run the relay race at the Fall Sports Day and turned in a fine performance. Her dream was to become a physical education teacher in junior high school.

Nine years later, however, while in the 6th grade of elementary school, she suddenly developed symptoms of an illness. In February of the following year, she was admitted to the Hiroshima Red Cross hospital. The diagnosis was leukemia.

Upon hearing the news from their teacher, classmates at the elementary school took turns

visiting her. When graduation day arrived, the diploma was given to her father. After one month in the hospital, she enrolled in the same junior high school as her friends, but she never attended class.

On August 6, 1954, she received permission from her doctors to leave the hospital to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony with her family. On the way to the park, however she had a relapse, fell ill and immediately returned

of cranes always believing and hoping that this action would extend her life. But on October 25, 1955, after an arduous eight month struggle, she succumbed to the disease and passed away surrounded by her family.

Her death generated a campaign to build a monument where people could pray for world peace and for those children who lost their lives to the atomic bomb. The Children’s Peace Monument, standing in Peace Park was built with donated funds from all over Japan. As the story of Sadako spread worldwide, the response was overwhelming. Today, approximately 10 million paper cranes are offered annually at the Children’s Peace Monument.

Visitors to Peace Memorial Park enjoy the visual delight of thousands of brightly colored paper cranes that are everywhere to be seen in the park. The paper cranes are part of an ancient Japanese tradition known as paper folding or “origami”. Today, these paper cranes symbolize more than just a craft; they have become a

symbol of peace. Paper folding is done in many countries as a “wish for peace”. The lasting connection between paper cranes and peace can be traced back to a brave young girl named Sadako Sasaki.

For more information, please visit:
www.cityhiroshima.jp/shimin/heiwa/crane.html



10 million paper cranes are offered annually by visitors as a prayer for world peace at the Children’s Peace Monument in Peace Park, Hiroshima.

to her hospital bed. She never experienced the Peace Ceremony.

One day, a thousand paper cranes arrived at the hospital and she was given some of them as a get well gift. She was inspired to begin folding her own paper cranes believing that this would help her recover from illness. She meticulously worked the paper into the shape

My Visit to the City of Salinas

by Kazuhiro Watanabe
Assistant Director of JLGC

A mere twelve miles from the Pacific Ocean, Salinas is part of the Central California Coast and is known as the "Salad Bowl of the World." With over 150,000 residents, Salinas blends yesterday's charm with today's modern conveniences. The world famous Steinbeck Festival, the California Rodeo, the California International Airshow and the National Steinbeck Center are just a few of the attractions in this beautiful area.

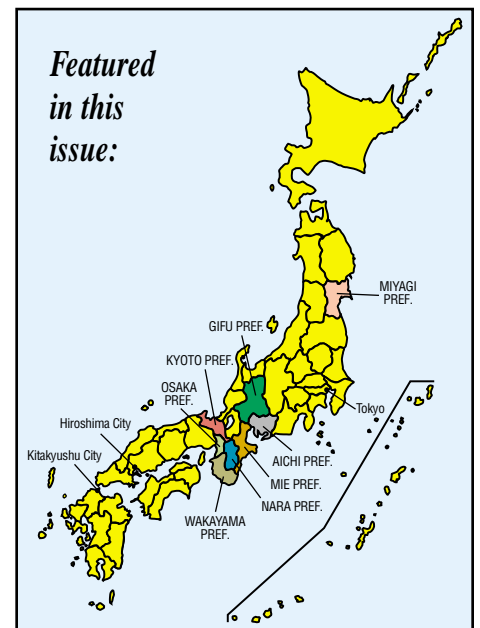
I was impressed with how the community participated in the decision making process. I attended a city council meeting to observe local democracy in action and learned how problems that can occur can be solved. For example, Salinas has a problem with shopping carts that people leave in residential areas. City officials proposed imposing fines. Local business owners and the community actively took part in the discussion.

As another example surrounding a more complex issue, a new parking garage to accommodate downtown commercial construction was to be publicly financed by means of local bonds. At the council meeting, the underwriter's representative gave a presentation to the council members and the attending public on the bond issuance process. This kind of work session, which included detailed explanations and community participation, is not normally experienced at Japanese assembly meetings. It made me reflect on the independent and autonomous character of American local government.



The author, Kazuhiro Watanabe (right), with Mr. David Mora (left), City Manager of the City of Salinas, California.

I would like to express my appreciation to David Mora, City Manager of the City of Salinas, California for extending the invitation to visit this wonderful city. Mr. Mora visited Aichi Prefecture last year as a participant of the 2003 CLAIR Fellowship Program and his generous reciprocity gave me the opportunity to learn more about the fabric and culture of the community he serves. Lastly, special thanks to Assistant City Manager Green who arranged my meetings and interviews during my visit. I shall never forget my stay in Salinas and someday hope to have the good fortune to return there.



**Featured
in this
issue:**