

Matthew さんの感想文

On Friday, I visited Kaizuka City Hall, where I met Mayor Fujihara-san and members of the city council and other government officials for Kaizuka. I was very honored to be so warmly received, but was a little surprised to see a television cameraman there, and nervous because I am never on television. However, several people told me that it went well, so for that I am thankful.

Also on Friday, I went to Mr. Yamamoto-san's woodcarving workshop, where I got to watch him and his apprentices creating beautiful pieces of art, and saw pictures of many of his products – I especially liked the donjiri, which are masterpieces. This was interesting to me because I have always liked woodworking, and it was inspirational to me to perhaps start up again when I get home. I know I will not be able to create as wonderful pieces as Mr. Yamamoto-san, but it would be fun to do some simple things.

On Friday evening, I had a delicious and entertaining dinner with Mayor Fujihara-san and some other officials at a great Japanese restaurant, where we exchanged lovely gifts, and where I had little too much plum wine.

On Saturday evening, I attended the marathon's celebration dinner at the Righa Royal Hotel, with many other invited runners from around the world, and where I met Eric Wanianiana, one of the world's best marathon runners. He was very gracious and allowed me to take some pictures with him, and gave me encouragement for the marathon.

On Sunday, I ran in the Senshu International Marathon, starting in Hamadera Park in Sakai and ending in Rinku Park. Mayor Fujihara-san fired the gun to start the marathon, then at about 22-23 km I passed the Kaizuka cheering section, which was very encouraging to help me finish the race.

After the marathon, I was very tired, but my evening hosts took me to the Rainbow bath house, which was so relaxing and good for my sore body, both the warm and cold water. Then they prepared a wonderful tempura dinner and we shared good sake and great conversation with Yoshiko and Takashi Sato-san and 2 of their children, Tomoko and Koji. After that, my host family, Mieko Ishihara-san and her husband, Ryoichi, took me to their house where I slept very well and enjoyed 3 days of their generous

hospitality.

On Monday, I visited Mr. Yamada-san and saw his collection of pictures and souvenirs from Culver City from 1968 and after, which was very interesting because it showed me many things in Culver City which I did not know about. It is funny that someone in Kaizuka City has more knowledge of the history of Culver City than I do!

On Monday, I also went to a traditional Japanese restaurant near Kshiwada Castle, and then to a traditional tea room, where I wore a kimono for the first time and learned how to do a proper tea presentation. I was also permitted to try to arrange some flowers. The sensei was very understanding of my not knowing how to do things right for the tea ceremony and was very helpful, and then he showed me how to do much nicer floral arrangements than I was able to make on my first attempt.

On Monday evening, I went to a dinner with the Kaizuka marathon runners from this year and past years at a wonderful restaurant that had many types of food, including Italian and French. We all had a lot of fun, as everyone was in good spirits and there was plenty of sake and beer.

On Tuesday, I went to Kyoto with KAIFA, where we visited Kiyomizu-dera, Kinkakuji and the Nishijin store, where I purchased scarves for my wife, mother, 3 sisters and mother-in-law. The temple was magnificent, especially the stage, and Kinkakuji was stunning in its beauty, both that of the pavilion and the natural beauty of the grounds.

Then Ishihara-san took me to dinner at a restaurant where the rooms are giant former soy sauce barrels, which was very interesting and fun. The food was very tasty and again the company was most enjoyable.

This was a trip I will never forget. The kindness shown to me by everyone I met, the friendliness of the people I talked to during my stay, and the many gifts I received were so much appreciated. I hope that I leave you with as many good memories of my visit as I have of all of you, and am grateful of the way I was treated like an old friend, almost like family. Kaizuka City is, to me, the number one city in Japan because of its people, and I feel very lucky and honored to have chosen to represent Culver City and visit your wonderful home.