

I WAS TOUCHED AND HONORED TO BE INVITED TO LEARN ABOUT AND PARTICIPATE IN THE TRADITIONAL JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY, LED BY MINAMI SENSEI AND ORGANIZED BY KAIFA.

FIRST, I WAS PAMPERED LIKE A MOVIE STAR AND DRESSED CAREFULLY IN A BEAUTIFUL KIMONO FIT FOR AN EMPEROR.

HUMBLED, I KNEELED DOWN AND BOWED AS TEA WAS SERVED TO ME. I LEARNED HOW TO CAREFULLY PICK UP THE BOWL AND TURN IT THREE TIMES BEFORE DRINKING.

AS I WAS TAUGHT TO PREPARE THE TEA FOR OTHERS AND THEN MYSELF, I UNDERSTOOD HOW THIS RITUAL INVOLVES ALL FIVE SENSES AND ESPECIALLY THE SIXTH SENSE OR SPIRITUAL ASPECT OF SELF UNDERSTANDING AND INNER PEACE. IF THIS WERE NOT A UNIQUE ENOUGH EXPERIENCE, I WAS COMPLETELY AMAZED AS SENSEI THEN TAUGHT US THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF JAPANESE FLOWER ARRANGING. HE SHOWED US PRINCIPLES OF SPACE AND TRIANGULATION, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY THE SYMBOLISM AND SPIRITUALITY

INHERENT IN THE PLACEMENT AND CHOICE OF THE FLOWERS. I WATCHED IN AWE AS HE RE-WORKED MY ARRANGEMENT EVER SO SLIGHTLY AND TURNED IT INTO A WORK OF ART BEFORE MY EYES.

THIS ARTFUL AFTERNOON OF TEA AND FLOWERS HAS LEFT A LASTING IMPRESSION ON ME AND IS ONE THAT I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL TO HAVE EXPERIENCED.