

Lest We Forget

By Daizo Kusayanagi

Work is well under way on the Osaka International Garden and Greenery Exposition slated to open in 1990. The overall design has been finalized, close to ¥80 billion (\$640 million) has been raised, and construction has begun throughout the site. Although not known as a creative fount of ideas with universal appeal, Japan is displaying unusual flair and fervor in preparing for this Garden Expo. In part, I suspect that the noneconomic garden theme has been chosen out of a desire to erase the image of Japan as a nation dedicated solely to economic concerns and to atone for its "economic aggression" over the last decade.

In preparing for this riot of greenery, there are a number of ad hoc committees working on different expo-related issues. I remember one meeting of one of the committees that I am on. We were discussing the exposition's conceptual underpinnings when Mr. K, a successful event producer and pavilion designer who has been involved in every exposition Japan has ever hosted, stated, "My basic approach to pavilion design is to help Japan repay its debt to the rest of the world. Japan is not particularly blessed with natural resources or anything else, and we could never have come this far strictly on our own. So it is only right that we offer the people of the world an opportunity to share in our enjoyment. I always hope my pavilions will give people pleasure."

Debt to repay

Although many of us were afraid this was going to be one of those rambling monologues that old people are so good at, Mr. K went on, "But there is still a major debt that I have yet to repay, and I want to devote my time to that after this Expo is over."

He now had everyone's undivided attention. "I have often asked myself who has contributed the most to modernization. After thinking about this for half a

year, I have concluded that it is Thomas Edison. If it were not for Edison's genius, not only would we not have light bulbs, but we would not have such other conveniences as refrigerators, toasters, automobiles and the *Shinkansen* bullet train. Not only do these things use electricity, so does their manufacture. I am now 70 years old, and in the next 10 years I plan to devote myself to forming a Thomas Edison Memorial Commission and getting contributions from Japanese industry for erecting Edison Memorial Statues in all of the major capitals of the world."

This declaration moved another member of the committee—Professor E, an architect—to speak up, "Every time I use the Tokyo University library, I am reminded of the Rockefellers," he said. "Everyone knows that Tokyo University's famous Yasuda Auditorium was built with a grant from the banker Ginjiro Yasuda; but, since the bequests were with the understanding that nothing would be named after the Rockefellers, very few people—students and faculty alike—know that the library was rebuilt after the earthquake with Rockefeller money. I wish more people realized what a crucial role this library has played in Japan's modernization, and how noble it was of the Rockefellers not to publicize their largess."

Looking back on the past, historian Mr. T declared that Japan is just as indebted to William Smith Clark, who came to Japan in 1876 to serve as the first president of Sapporo Agriculture College. "Even though Clark only spent nine months in Sapporo, his strong Christian beliefs served as a lifelong inspiration to such devout Christians as Kanzo Uchimura and Inazo Nitobe and were a major impetus for the development of modern Japanese thought.

"One of Clark's followers was Gentaro Adachi, who would later become an authority on raw silk, and Adachi's daughter Taka became a very influential woman in her capacity as one of the people respon-

sible for educating Emperor Hirohito during his formative years. Emperor Hirohito was an accomplished naturalist, and it was Taka Adachi, who taught the emperor to observe nature and to record his observations scientifically. Of course, Taka learned what she knew from her father, who in turn was a student of Clark's."

Unknown kindness

"But there is no need to go back so far in history," remarked Mr. Y, who studied in America 30 years ago, back when the journey took nearly two weeks by ship. "It is impossible to even begin to count the number of Japanese who have been able to study under Fulbrights and other American scholarship programs. Japanese who complain that Americans are lazy, mindless consumers living beyond their means are just spoiled rich kids or corporate-sponsored students who have no idea of the kindness Americans display toward people with real ambition."

Tearful with emotion, he added, "Just think of all the very successful and well-known Japanese who have studied in the





United States. There is the economist Ryuzo Sato, mathematician Heisuke Hironaka, economists Akira Takami and Shin'ichi Ichimura, Keidanren's Masaya Miyoshi, and so many more."

Sparked by Mr. K's tribute to Edison, this Expo committee meeting had turned into a "Salute to America" pep rally, and listening to all these soliloquies made me more aware than ever of what tremendous goodwill the United States has in Japan. There are, of course, also many Japanese who have studied in Europe. And whether it be Europe or America, the Japanese are known for their lifelong love-hate relationship with the country where they studied. Yet the love side seems to be stronger in Japanese who have studied in the United States than it is in those who have studied in Europe, probably because Americans are so open-minded, so cheerful and so quick to lend a helping hand.

Last November's U.S. election results were a surprise for many Japanese. Although we were prepared for a relatively weak president and a strong Democratic Congress, we were unprepared for the election of so many younger members of

Congress too young to remember World War II.

For a long time after the war, international conferences and get-togethers between Japanese and Americans featured heated debate during the day and comradesly reminiscences on shared wartime experiences over drinks in the evening. Indeed, this common experience acted as a social salve to cement the ties between Japan and the United States.

Common feelings

Whether a person fought against Japan in the Pacific or alongside the heroic 442nd (a regiment made up of Japanese-Americans) in Europe, there were common experiences and feelings that linked us together. After publication of Masayo Duus's book about the all-nisei 442nd Regiment, these discussions often explored questions of racial prejudice and personal identity as well, and people who had once fought against each other found that they were "war buddies" by the time the evening was out.

While I first noticed this internationally, it is just as true that shared expe-

riences bind people together within a country. The chasm between those who fought in the war and those born after the war is huge—too vast to be bridged by words. This is true in America no less than in Japan. Even though many Americans subsequently fought in Korea or Vietnam, most Americans no longer remember World War II. And the fact that the majority of U.S. legislators, from the Senate and the House to the state legislatures as well, are people who did not experience World War II could mark the end of this common ground for dialogue between Japan and the United States.

Now, before it is too late, I would urge America to make better use of the vast reservoir of pro-American feelings that is still left in Japan. Japan and America are worlds apart culturally. America is only 200 years old, the circumstances of its national birth are clear to all, citizens elect their president every four years, and America is self-sufficient with its mighty production and mass consumption.

By contrast, the origins of the Japanese state over 2,000 years ago are still shrouded in mystery, Japan has to import nearly 750 million tons of raw materials every year to keep its factories busy, and the prime minister is selected by a small cabal in a smoke-filled room. Thus the introduction of cultural issues into the Japan-U.S. dialogue creates more confusion and misunderstanding than it resolves.

The Rockefellers could afford to do their good deeds anonymously, but the United States no longer has that luxury. It is essential that America do more to blow its own horn and—with the help of the pro-American spokesmen in Japan—to take credit where credit is due before this legacy of goodwill is dissipated. ■

(This is the second of six essays by Daizo Kusayanagi.)

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