

AWARD OF MERIT WINNER

A Melody of Oriental Roses

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At long last my dream came true - two weeks in Japan. The long awaited World Federation of Rose Societies 14th triennial Convention in Osaka, Japan had arrived – how could I pass up this opportunity?

The group from our district consisted of Jolene Adams, Barbara Gordon, Lenore Ruckman, Steve and Diana Steps, Donaldina Joung, Ron and Rosemary Sawyer and me, the rest of the tour group was from throughout the US.

After our flight to Narita airport and crossing the international dateline, a limousine ride brought us to Haneda, Tokyo's domestic airport. Our first destination was a two night stay in the historic city of Hiroshima.

Our first stop the next day was Iwakuni to walk the old Kintaikyo wooden bridge which features five beautiful arches, an engineering marvel built completely of wood in 1674.

A short ferry ride brought us to the famous shrine island of Miyajima. The most recognized landmark here is the huge red 6th century O-Tori gate usually surrounded by water. Our arrival was at low tide this gave us a great perspective to see how big it actually is by the size of the people standing next to it. The whole island is a shrine and is considered sacred.

The pouring rain the next day didn't deter us from enjoying the Hiroshima Botanical Gardens filled with many Fuchsias, Bonsai trees, monuments and a terraced rose garden. This 60 acre garden though only started in 1996 is already known for its vast 3000 Orchid hybridizing program.

The Peace Memorial Park and Museum were a somber experience. The museum will haunt me for the rest of my life. We walked the Rainbow Bridge to ensure as we were told crossing it will bring long life. The sincerity of the Japanese people living daily with this memory and being totally committed to peace is impressive.

We visited the Fukuyama rose garden on our way to Okayama, unfortunately the rain was following us and only a handful of roses were in bloom. Okayama Castle sits on a hill overlooking the extensive grounds of Korakuen Gardens. This Japanese style garden has several shrines and small gardens within the grounds. It took 14 years to complete and for several centuries has been considered one of the most famous gardens in Japan.

Arriving in Osaka on Thursday afternoon we quickly made ourselves at home. All the hotels on the trip were elegant, modern and very comfortable including our home for the duration of the convention. Most were situated next to train stations and contained wonderful shopping centers and restaurants. From our window high above we could see the trains arriving and departing including the famous bullet train which looks like a white snake.

After resting up we were ready the following morning for the opening ceremonies at the convention hall a few blocks from the hotel. We were greeted with traditional instrumental music and stood to greet the Princess Akiko as she entered the premises to officially open the convention. After the introductions of several dignitaries Dr. Tommy Cairns, the WFRS President, awarded the first ever Della Balfor Rose Friendship Award to Richard Balfor and he was visibly moved. Della, his late wife, was a true lady in every sense of the word and always had something positive and uplifting to say when meeting friends.

After the ceremony I ask Donaldina Jounng to join me in presenting the rose book SFRS sent as a gift to the president of the Japan Rose Society. He was surprised and delighted accepting the book with his thanks and sent many greetings to the members of SFRS. Then it was time to get reacquainted with friends and partake of the sumptuous buffet lunch. The princess joined us and several of us were allowed to have our picture taken with her.

The afternoon tour took us to Nara, the old 1300 year of capital of Japan. We paid a visit to the Todaiji Temple which houses the largest Buddha in Japan, a national treasure since the 8th century. The height of the body is almost 49 feet tall and the length of his ears alone is over 8 feet.

The next day was the rose show and several of us American judges were invited to judge the show. The show was beautiful and very well attended by the public. We should be so lucky to have 155,000 people attend our shows. I got a few ideas that just might show up in our show schedule sometime in the future.

There was no rain predicted for Mother's Day. We visited Hirakata Rose Garden in Kyoto which is situated in an amusement park. This English style garden was the first garden we saw in full bloom. The ferris wheel and rollercoaster was a terrific draw for many but we still had a Sake factory to visit with samples of very good Sake and Plum wine. After dinner, being Mother's Day, we continued celebrating at our hotel with a rose drink, complete with a real rose, specially invented in honor of the many visiting rosarians from around the world.

The famous Aoi (Hollyhock) festival drew us back to Kyoto the next day. The festival is in commemoration of the Samurai Lords and Shoguns who had to visit the emperor once a year to renew their allegiance.

The evening's festivities were a reception hosted by the Japan Rose Society complete with food, wine, and entertainment by Geisha's dancing to drumming rhythm. All the past

presidents of the WFRS were invited to participate in the sake ceremony of opening the first sake cask of the year. This is done by breaking the wooden cask with a wooden mallet, and then everyone got a taste of sake in a little wooden memento box.

The Kinkakuji Temple, famous for its beautiful garden, brilliant Golden Pavilion and its fantastic mirror pond couldn't be past up. Even in the rain it is incredible. I couldn't take enough pictures.

A visit to the Hamadera Rose Garden where 6500 roses of 250 varieties are planted was definitely worth seeing even in the pouring rain. We were delighted to recognize many of the same varieties growing in our own gardens. The OGR section is landscaped in a natural setting where several varieties in bloom were drawing quite a crowd – the OGR aficionados in our group were drooling.

Over 650 people attended the closing banquet. A seven course meal left us very satisfied and ready for the formalities to begin. The WFRS Gold Medal was awarded to Dr. Tommy Cairns and the Silver Medal Citation to Luis Desamero they are both from Southern California. The Rose Hills Rose Garden in Whittier, California and the Washington Park Rose Garden in Oregon both received the Recognition as World Parks of Roses. The gavel was handed to the next president Gerald Mailard from Switzerland. The WFRS flag was lowered and presented to Canada who will host the next convention in Vancouver in three years. It was time to say fare well to old and new friends and promising to see them in Vancouver.

Our tour continued and we caught the bullet train in Nagaoya for the 1 ½ hr. ride to Hakone, a thermal area in the mountains. The public mineral baths are very relaxing but only three of us were brave enough to partake in the ritual. On the way back to Tokyo we stopped for a boat ride on Lake Ashi and a possible view of Mt. Fuji (it was covered in mist).

Our last day came all too soon. The Imperial Palace was still on the agenda and the sun was shining at last. We could only get as far as the bridge; the actual palace grounds are only open twice a year. The public is allowed onto the grounds on December 23, the emperor's birthday and January 2, New Years Day.

Our last evening was spent cruising on Tokyo Bay with a sumptuous Japanese dinner. The raw sea snails marinated in soy sauce were delicious. As if to make our last evening even more memorable the sunset was incredibly beautiful – we didn't want the evening to end.

Filling in every moment on Monday morning (our plane wasn't leaving until evening) seven of us attended a most unforgettable Japanese flower arranging workshop at the Ikebana headquarters in Tokyo. We all made an arrangement and received very favorable critic from the teacher, the headmistress of the school. Incredible how much can be learned in just three hours.

All too soon we were saying fare well to the rest of the group at the airport in Los Angeles and everyone was on their way home. It was an unforgettable experience traveling through this beautiful country and I only wish it could have been a much longer stay.