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JAS Benefit Golf Outing

The JAS Benefit Golf Outing this year was a triumph again, thanks to 48 players, 18 hole-sponsors and fine weather. The purpose of this yearly golf outing was to donate money to the St. Louis Japanese Language School for Children. For the past nine years JAS had been able to raise \$35,200 for the school through this enjoyable event.

The golf game this year was held on September 19 at the beautiful but challenging Pevely Farms Golf Course with the format of a four-person scramble. The team of Kendall Itoku, Demetrius Easley, Steve Mitori and Peter Nguyen was the big winner with a phenomenal score of 61, eleven under par. The same team won the tournament last year at the score of 63. What's the secret? Just shoot long and straight? Was it "between the two ears"? Was it team play? Whatever it was, surely it was not



~Presentation on Koi by Gilbert Chen~

Sponsored by Japan America Society of St. Louis and St. Louis Water Gardening Society

Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2008

Time: 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

7:00-7:20 SLWGS business meeting

(JAS members are welcome.)

7:20-7:30 Refreshments

7:30-9:00 Presentation

Place: Missouri Botanical Garden

Gilbert Chen, a member of the St. Louis Water Gardening Society, is a well recognized figure at the Annual Japanese Festival at the Missouri Botanical Garden for koi, colorful Japanese carp. His presentation will include the history of koi, varieties of koi and koi keeping along with the number of slides from koi shows in the U.S. and Japan. Please come if you are interested in learning more about koi. Gilbert will answer all the questions you have about the colorful and elegant fish and how you can keep them healthy and beautiful.

For more information:

TEL (314) 516-5754 E-mail: cisjas@umsl.edu

Tea Ceremony 2007

On the weekend of November 1 and 2, UM-St. Louis and the Japan America Society were honored to welcome Dr. Kimiko Gunji from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for a Japanese Tea Ceremony Demonstration and Hands-On Workshop. Dr. Gunji is the Director of the acclaimed Japan House at Urbana-Champaign and is widely renowned for her expertise in traditional Japanese culture.

The Friday afternoon demonstration was held in Gallery 210 to a rapt audience who enjoyed the beauty of the tea ceremony as well as the cultural insight to rituals that Dr. Gunji shared with us.



Saturday morning found a devoted group of 12 students, fac-

ulty and community members meeting to spend a morning experiencing a hands-on introduction to the art of the tea ceremony.

We quickly learned that in 3 hours we could barely scratch the surface of the intricate rituals that made up the ceremony, but everyone thoroughly enjoyed the introduction, and interest in a St. Louis tea group seems to have taken hold.

Several of Dr. Gunji's former students were in attendance this year and have volunteered to lead the study group. If you are interested in taking part in this group please contact Beth Eckelkamp at 314-516-6517.

Dr. Gunji assured us that she will be back again next year and we will certainly look forward to another wonderful cultural experience with her.



Shinnai and Kuruma Ningyo

In the evening of October 19th the J.C.Penney Auditorium of the University of Missouri-St.Louis was packed with an audience charmed by Shinnai singing and narration by Tsuruga Wakasanojo XI, a living national treasure of Japan and Kuruma Ningyo Puppetry performed by the puppeteer masters Nishikawa Koryu V and Nishikawa Ryuei.



Shinnai, a style of narrative singing originally created and performed by the first master Tsuruga Wakasanojo was brought into fashion in 1770s by his ardent student, Tsuruga Shinnai, whose name later became the name of this type of singing.



Kuruma Ningyo, is the 19th century innovation of Bunraku, the classical Japanese puppetry developed in the late 17th century. While classical Bunraku puppetry requires three

puppeteers to control a single puppet, Kuruma Ningyo puppetry requires only one puppeteer to control a single puppet. In Kuruma Ningyo, the puppeteer, by sitting on a low stool with three wheels and his feet attached to the puppet's feet, can move the puppet with him to and fro and round on the stage just as if the puppet were freely walking or even running around. That is the reason why it is called Kuruma (wheels) Ningyo (puppet). Also in Kuruma Ningyo, unlike Bunraku, the puppet's arms and head are directly attached to the puppeteer's hands, thus making possible fast-paced, lively but subtle movements of the puppet possible for intensely emotional scenes.



Tsuruga Wakasanojo XI's clear voice and superb articulation made his narrative singing easy to understand even to untrained ears. While the English translation of main verses appeared on a screen, his humorous delivery of lines in English peppered here and there throughout his rendition made the entire show very interesting and enjoyable even to the many non-Japanese speakers in the audience.

In the first show of the program, Kurokami or Black Hair, since the puppeteer's face was not covered with a usual piece of black cloth, the audience could observe the subtle changes of his facial expression that were in unison with the subtle movement of the puppet's head which gave the audience a sort of illusion that the puppet herself had subtle changes of real expression on her face.



The second and last show, Yaji and Kita, was a hilarious two-act play adopted from Jippensha Ikku's (1765-1831) best seller, a humorous story "Tokaido'o Dochu Hizakurige -On-foot Journey from Edo (Tokyo) to Kyoto." The animated funny actions of Yajirobei and Hitahachi, the jocular main characters of the this rib-tickling story were most dexterously performed by Master Puppeteers Nishikawa Koryu V and Nishikawa Ryuei, demonstrating how the fast-moving animations were possible by Kuruma Ningyo.



The clear, well-modulated tune by Shamisen accompanying the narrative singing of Tsuruga Wakasanojo XI with perfection was indicative of years of professional training of Ms. Tsuruga Isejuro and Ms. Tsuruga Isetsuwa.

Annual Dinner 2007

More than 60 guests enjoyed the Annual Dinner on November 8, 2007 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Society. This year, the Board decided to hold the dinner in a Japanese restaurant. Sansui Japanese Restaurant in Warson Woods was the venue for the delicious, multi-course dinner buffet. The atmosphere was enhanced by a giant ice sculpture carved to hold bottles of house-made pineapple-sake.



One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award



to George Hasegawa. The award acknowledges the importance of George's work not only as one of the founders of JAS-St. Louis but also in the community as instrumental in planning and implementing the beautiful

Japanese Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The award is especially appropriate this year when George celebrates his

88th birthday, the beiju (rice age) birthday, on November 23.

Guests, including Ms. Hiroko Matsuo, consul and director of Japan Information Center at Consulate General of Japan at Chicago, were entertained by Ms. Kazuko Rohrer, the 2006 winner of the All North American Karaoke Singing Contest. Her singing career has also included guest appearances at the Bon-Odori and organizer of the popular karaoke contest at the annual Japanese Festival.



During the business portion of the dinner, JAS members elected new Officers and Board members. For the Board, Mr. Takaaki Fukui, President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry will serve a three year term and Mr. Thad W. Simons, president of Novus International Inc. will serve two years.



Japanese "YES" and "NO"

Japanese "yes" and "no" are sometimes confusing to Americans.

American: I don't think it's going to be OK.

Japanese: Yes.

American: Oh. You think it's going to be OK.

Japanese: Oh, no, no.

American, now confused: OK, it's not going to be OK ?

Japanese : Yes !

American: You mean "NO". it is NOT going to be OK.

Japanese: (impatiently) Yes !

The above dialogue a bit of an exaggeration, but it can happen and sometimes it can cause a fatal situation, particu-

larly in manufacturing plant operations.

The cause of this sort of a problem is that a Japanese will say "yes" to express his/her AGREEMENT with what has been said regardless of whether the sentence is negative or affirmative, as in "Yes, I agree with you. I do not think it will be OK , either." Does this make sense ?



Iroha Karuta...

Many Japanese love to play *karuta tori* (grabbing card game). Particularly during the New Years Holidays).

In *karuta tori*, the players compete with each other for the number of cards they grab. A person who grabs the largest number of cards will win. And of course a person with a combination of a good memory and a quick hand has a good chance to win.

In the case of *iroha karuta tori*, players sit on the floor, on their legs, and compete with their swiftness in grabbing cards. The first set of 48 cards feature a picture of various subjects. Those cards are called *efuda* (picture cards) or *torifuda* (grabbing cards). There is another set of 48 cards with classic proverbs and sayings that are relevant to the pictures of *efuda*. These card are called *yomifuda* (reading cards). As soon as a designated person (usually players take turns to be a designated reader) reads a proverb or saying off on a *yomifuda*, the grabbers' competition starts. In other words the quickest can grab the relevant *efuda* first. An *efuda* also carries in a big font the first letter of the corresponding proverb or saying to make it easier for grabbers to recognize the card.

There are 48 letters in the classic Japanese alphabet called *iroha* (ABC) and the proverbs and sayings of *iroha karuta* begin with one of those 48 letters. Japanese children, and adults as well, love this grabbing card game. Parents love their children to play this game because they think that those

proverbs and sayings will be engraved on their mind while they compete in the game. Actually, one can say that the proverbs and sayings thus registered in the Japanese mind have hidden but significant influence to their way of life.



Hana yori dango

“Better a full stomach than a beautiful view.”

Atama kakushite shiri kakusazu

“Your head is hidden alright, but you left your rear-end exposed.”



Ron yori sho'oko

“The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” or “Show me!”

Rakugo: Japanese sit down comedy



Performers sit on a small mattress and act out stories (in English), assuming the roles of several characters, with a comic style and structure. The stories reflect traditional concepts and values which remain meaningful and entertaining today. Rakugo comedy is an excellent tool for introducing Japanese culture, society and communication. JAS and the University of Missouri-St. Louis brings a fun, culturally enriching time to St. Louis community in February!

Tickets are available at Touhill Box Office:

TEL (314)-516-4949