

May 31, 2024

I took a day off and traveled 9-hours one way to visit Fallingwater, located in Pennsylvania. Fallingwater is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's greatest residential buildings and is one of the most important in American architectural history. The interior is decorated with ukiyo-e paintings that Wright collected. A stream flows under the house in the surrounding forest, and the waterfall is turned into a platform. From there, you can hear the cries of the birds and the sounds of the water. Nature and the building resonate in perfect harmony.



Koi Nobori/Carp streamers swim in the wind off Lake Michigan

At Fallingwater

## 1 1. Japan's Soft Power Shines with Riken Yamamoto's reception of Pritzker Architecture Prize

「Called “the Nobel Prize of Architecture,” the Pritzker Architecture Prize was awarded to Mr. Riken Yamamoto this year. He is the 9<sup>th</sup> Japanese person to win the award, the most of any nationality. When I visited the president of the Pritzker Foundation, he asked me, surprisingly, why so many Japanese architects have received awards.

“Community: the Architect as a Catalyst for Change” (the reason for this year's decision by the jury). Mr. Yamamoto responded with “Because Japanese architects are sending a social message.” Just as Frank Lloyd Wright was fascinated by the Japanese Pavilion “the Phoenix Hall” at

the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the harmony of nature and buildings is another beauty of Japanese architects. Mr. Yamamoto also places importance on the integration and dialogue between the environments of the natural world and those that are built.

I was honored to attend the Laureate Lecture and Panel Discussion ( May 16<sup>th</sup>, Illinois Institute of Technology's College of Architecture) and the ceremony and reception (May 18<sup>th</sup>, Art Institute of Chicago). After the lecture, many students lined up for an autograph and commemorative photo. At the award ceremony, attendees were not limited to only those involved in the architectural art field, but also included VIPs from various fields, including architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, and many others from Japan. In Chicago, the city of architecture, I felt deeply that Japanese architects and architecture are one of Japan's world-class soft powers.



Mr. Riken Yamamoto at the Laureate Lecture



Being awarded

## **2 Leaders and Centers of Japanese Culture in Each Region**

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, my wife and I attended a meeting at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Japan House, and the legacy of 50 years of teaching of Professor Emeritus Kimiko Gunji (former director).

Professor Emeritus Gunji introduced the word “kokoro” and its meaning “mind, heart, spirit” while also spreading traditional Japanese culture like tea ceremony, ikebana, and Japanese dance, not only at the

Japan House, but also in various other places. Many of those who have learned from her over the years and others from Japan and other parts of the state attended the event. Her students from across the years congratulated her, saying that they were greatly inspired by their encounter with traditional Japanese culture and art through Professor Emeritus Gunji and her coterie, and that it was a turning point that changed their lives.

After the meeting, we were invited to a tea ceremony at the Japan House, where we were served by an American dressed in a kimono. The original Japan House was established in 1975 by Professor Emeritus Shozo Sato. After its closure, the current Japan House was established in 1998 with Professor Emeritus Gunji as director. The new Japan House had a new and expansive Japanese garden and traditional tea rooms donated by the Urasenke family. It is encouraging to see that the Japan House has become a center for traditional Japanese culture and exchange, and is connected with people from all over the world who have received training and guidance from Professor Emeritus Sato and Professor Emeritus Gunji.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, I attended the Cherry Blossom Festival Fort Wayne in the second largest city in Indiana. The event is planned and operated mainly by officials from the local Nikkei organizations, Takaoka City sister city organization, and Saturday schools, and this year was the 16<sup>th</sup> time they've held the festival. It was held on a university campus and, compared to similar events held in the Midwest in places like St. Louis, Chicago, and Kansas City, it was one of the largest with over 10,000 visitors. Local parents and their children visited, and many enjoyed cosplaying and taking part in activities like drawing anime (really, they are all so good!), haiku, karaoke, kendama, and origami. Festivals have the power to bring people together and foster friendship. Cherry trees are a symbol of the friendship between Japan and the U.S. In 2018, the Consulate General donated cherry tree seedlings and planted them in Fort Wayne.



At Japan House with Professor Emeritus Gunji



Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival

### 3 Indiana Global Economic Summit

On May 22–26, I participated in the 2024 Indiana Global Economic Summit, a major event at the heart of Governor Holcomb's administration. The Summit is a useful venue for communication and relationship building, with many businesses, federal and local government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, and academics from within and outside the state and from around the world participating. A Keidanren mission, from Japan, led by Governor Fukuda of Tochigi Prefecture, Governor Omura of Aichi Prefecture, and Vice Chairman Sawada participated in the Summit. The Japanese delegation had the largest presence at the Summit in terms of delegates and activities. Japanese attendees held meetings with Governor Holcomb and U.S. senators, took part in speaking engagements, a reception for the 25th anniversary of the Tochigi–Indiana Sister–State–Prefecture, and other events co-sponsored by JETRO and the Japan–America Society of Indiana. The timing of the visit from the Keidanren mission shortly after PM Kishida's visit demonstrates how economic activities of Japanese companies and multilayered human exchanges are the foundation of the U.S.–Japan relationship. Our strong bonds of trust and friendship begin at the state and provincial level.

The last day of the Summit was the Indy 500. Ranked as one of the world's top three major motor races along with Monaco and Le Mans, this is a national event that attracts up to 400,000 spectators. While the start



of the race was delayed by four hours due to a thunderstorm, discussions and meetings continued with Governor Holcomb, the Secretary of Commerce and other state government officials, and dignitaries from within and outside of the state. In the Midwest, sports have become a networking opportunity. Takuma Sato, the only Japanese competitor, has won the race twice, in 2017 and 2020. Actually watching the race renewed my appreciation of how great it is to win the Indy 500



At the event with both governors and other participants



400,000 spectators at the Indy 500

On the way to Indianapolis, our group visited Aisin, which manufactures auto parts. In May, I also visited Nippon Express, located near O'Hare Airport, and Komatsu Mining in Milwaukee to see how Japanese companies are contributing to the U.S. not only to by creating American jobs but also by supporting various key economic sectors. Japanese companies play important roles in supporting U.S. logistics and supply chains, by always considering risks to supply chains and potential alternative and beneficial routes, and helping their customers, large corporations, to decarbonize. The tour visited sites where these companies are making particularly significant contributions. I would like to express our respect once again for the Japanese companies operating in the U.S., which have laid the foundation for a strong Japan-U.S. relationship.



Visited Nippon Express (May 15th)



Visited Komatsu Mining (May 30th)

#### 4 The Japanese-American Community' s Memorial Day Ceremony

On the last Monday of May, my wife and I were invited to attend the Memorial Day ceremony (a day for commemorating military personnel who died in battle) hosted by the Japanese-American Mutual Aid Society of Chicago. For many in the U.S. this is the weekend that marks the beginning of summer, but this year it was quite chilly. An event organizer told me, "Every year, it' s either very hot or very cold. It' s one or the other." Though despite the cold weather, 200 people from a wide range of groups among the Japanese-American community gathered in attendance, including local Japanese-American organizations, religious figures from various Japanese churches, Buddhist temples, and shrines, as well as representatives from the Japan-America Society, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Chicago Japanese Club. It was a solemn memorial service with scripture readings, prayers, choir hymns, and flower offerings.

This was my second time at the Montrose Cemetery in the Chicago suburbs since my first visit back in September of last year, which was just shortly after beginning my appointment. This cemetery is special to many Japanese-Americans for being the only cemetery after World War II that would accept burials of Japanese-Americans. When I come here I think of all who lost their lives during the war, and I am filled with gratitude towards Japanese-American veterans who earned the trust of American society. In my welcome remarks, I mentioned that the Japanese-American

veteran Mr. Kanaya was awarded France' s highest decoration on May 9<sup>th</sup> for his accomplishments with the Nisei 442<sup>nd</sup> Unit. Without losing their pride and values as both Americans and Japanese, Japanese-Americans have contributed to American Society, and Japan-U.S. relations on a whole. Let us pass on their history to future generations together.



Mr. Kanaya receives  
France' s highest decoration,  
the Legion of Honor



Welcome remarks at the ceremony