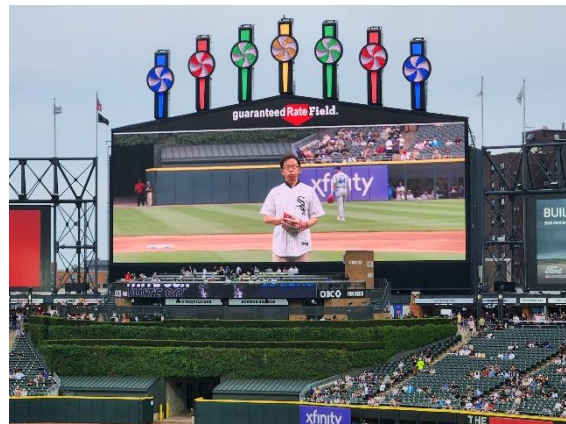


June 30, 2024

On June 25th, I climbed the mound at Guaranteed Rate Field, home of the Chicago White Sox. On my back: the number 15, the same number worn by Tadahito Iguchi who contributed to the 2005 World Series victory. The match was against the Los Angeles Dodgers. Immediately after the first pitch, Shohei Ohtani hit a home run as the leadoff hitter. By the way, a quarter of a century ago, then-Prime Minister Obuchi visited Chicago on an official visit to the United States. During his visit, he threw the ceremonial first pitch to Sammy Sosa in a Cubs game.



1. Western Nebraska ~ The Unique History of Japanese-Americans

From 1928 to 2018, the Japanese Hall in Western Nebraska was a gathering place for Japanese immigrants and the Japanese-American community. It was then relocated to the grounds of the nearby Legacy of the Plains Museum, to serve as an exhibit that presents and preserves the history of Japanese immigrants and Japanese-Americans. The museum held its grand opening on June 8th.

Japanese immigrants began arriving in Western Nebraska from the late 1890s to the early 1900s, and contributed to the state's railroad construction and agriculture (especially sugar beet cultivation). After

fulfilling their obligation in sending remittance to their family and relatives back home, many Japanese immigrants struggled on what to do next, but ultimately decided to stay in the United States, dreaming of finding happiness here. These Japanese were not subject to the internment camps, thereby paving a unique history much different from those from the West Coast and Chicago. A notable example is Father Hisanori Kano. Despite being interned himself, he was a community leader who earned the respect of White Americans, and was even close friends with Secretary of State and Democratic Party Presidential Nominee, Mr. William Jennings Bryan. There was also a famous Western restaurant called the Eagle Café run by local Japanese people for many years. You can learn all about this and more from the museum's exhibits.

I participated in the opening ceremony and preceding events, and received a warm welcome from the locals while experiencing their rich culture and the surrounding nature. I wonder if the Japanese who immigrated to this area 100 years ago also received the same warm welcome and hospitality, and felt so comfortable they decided to stay. Ms. Sakurada was the main driving force behind the Japanese Hall project, and I found it impressive how she gathered so many supporters with her enthusiasm. I am sure her ancestors who immigrated here were filled with that same enthusiasm too.

The opening ceremony was attended by about 200 people including Governor Pillen, and about 400 people attended the dinner. Along with those in Nebraska, many supporters came from all over the United States, even from Hawaii. You could also see many large family reunions happening all in one place. I hope that the Japanese Hall will not only preserve the history and legacy of Japanese-Americans, but will also be a place for Japanese-Americans to gather in unity, as well as a place to present Japanese culture to the greater public.

On a side note, there are no flights to Western Nebraska from Omaha – the largest city in Eastern Nebraska. So I had to fly in to Denver, Colorado, and then travel by car for three hours. Unlike the endless straight roads and completely flat cornfields of the Midwest, the scenery in the Mountain Time Zones is quite varied. It's important to travel

to areas in our jurisdiction not only by plane but also by car, in order to truly reflect on the land and climate, the culture and industries that have developed there, and the deeper nature and political trends of the people who live there.



Governor Pillen (Center)



Ms. Sakurada and
the Governor



A hanging banner from an
old play back then

2 Groundbreaking Ceremony for New Kikkoman Plant – Toward the Next 50 Years

The ground breaking ceremony for Kikkoman's new Jefferson plant, their second in Wisconsin after their Walworth plant which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, was held on June 12. Kikkoman said the factors that led them to examine 64 potential sites across the United States before ultimately deciding on Jefferson were the same as those that led to the selection of Walworth 50 years ago. Those factors were the availability of soybeans, wheat, and high-quality water resources for soy sauce production. Along with a geographic location and logistics suitable for distributing products quickly throughout the United States. And above all, the state's hard working people and the warm welcome and strong support from the local community.

Honorary Chairman Yuzaburo Mogi, Chairman Horikiri, Executive Director Mogi and his wife, Governor and Mrs. Evers, former Governor Thompson, county mayors, and others from the state of Wisconsin and Japan were in attendance. The ceremony was a symbolic demonstration of the high expectations and mutual appreciation felt by both sides, as well as of the strong bonds of trust and friendship that have been fostered through years of business partnerships and people-to-people exchanges at the state level, which serves as the foundation of the U.S.-Japan relationship.

Kikkoman's entry into Wisconsin served as the breakthrough moment that help create the current U.S.-Japan economic partnership. At the time, there was some opposition and concern from local residents, but the Governor of the state at the time personally attended a local town meeting and explained the benefits of Kikkoman's investment.

Now with over 50 years of experience, trust, and reputation in the business, no such opposition or concern was voiced this time along. When we visited Kikkoman's Walworth plant last December, we were impressed to hear that the employees there present the plant with a commemorative gift every five years. Kikkoman is a role model for subsequent Japanese companies on how to "coexist and co-prosper with the local community as a good corporate citizen" and "become an American company". The sister prefecture-state relationship between Chiba Prefecture (the birthplace of Kikkoman) and Wisconsin, initiated in 1990 during Governor Thompson's administration is another example of the virtuous cycle that exists between economic partnership and people-to-people exchange.

Once again, I would like to express my deepest respect to Honorary Chairman Mogi for crossing the "borders that are meant to be crossed" as a part of the "true mission" of his life, which is to expand his business overseas.



Ceremonial first dig



Honorary Chairman Mogi, Governor Evers and his wife, family of former Governor Thompson, and CG and his wife

3. June: the month before summer vacation, full of events

On June 13th, the Japan America Society of Chicago held their 94th Anniversary Dinner. It was announced at this dinner that Mitsukuni Baba, who has been running the association as the Executive Director for 16 years, will be stepping down from his position. Marion M. Friebus-Flaman, who is of Japanese descent, will be taking over the position of Executive Director as of July 1. Mr. Baba has already received the Foreign Minister's Commendation for his achievements, but I would like to once again express my gratitude for his support of the Japan-America Society for the past 16 years.

On June 16th, the Chicago Japan Festival was held downtown in Millennium Park, under the glistening summer sun. It was an exciting time; from Japanese cultural activities, such as ikebana, tea ceremony, and koto music, to J-Pop and anime, martial arts like kendo, karate, and aikido, and booths of various organizations and Japanese companies, demonstrations of Japanese sweets and soba making, to Japanese food stalls, there was something for everyone to get excited about. Festivals have the power to connect people to each other. Various groups and people related to the Japanese community, Japanese American community, and Japan-US relations came together under the common desire to make the festival a success and fun for everyone, further strengthening their sense of solidarity.

Also, since the event was held outdoors in a prime location in the city, many Chicagoans and tourists who normally have no connection to Japan also stopped by the festival. The yearly Japan Festival is the largest Japanese American group event in the Chicago area in terms of scale and number of attendees. I would like to once again express my gratitude to the people who played a central role in the planning and management, as well as to the many participants, volunteers, and sponsoring companies.

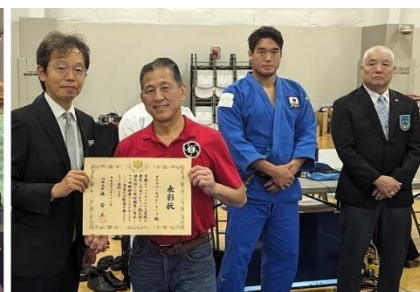
The same weekend, there was a judo-related event, at which Olympic Medalist Ryunosuke Haga (Asahikasei Company) was in attendance, where I had the opportunity to present the Foreign Minister's Commendation to Douglas Tono, president of the Tohkon Judo Academy. President Tono has contributed greatly to the spread of judo in Chicago since opening his judo school in 1992. A training course for children was also held, overseen by female judoka, Megumi Ishikawa, an All-Japan National Champion. Through judo, I hope that children in the United States can increase their interest in Japan, strengthen their mental fortitude, and learn manners and respect for others.



Retiring Executive
Director Mitsukuni Baba



Japan Festival



Foreign Minister's
Commendation for President
Tono