

July 31, 2024

This July 4th marked the 248th American Independence Day. Many fireworks were set off all across the United States. It was the first Independence Day I celebrated since I was assigned to this post. I spent it by going to Lake Michigan and enjoying the fireworks with American citizens.



Fireworks in Lake Michigan



With Amb. Yamada and Gov. Pritzker

1 Once every 4 years, big political events in summer

From July 15 to 18, I attended the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The national conventions, held separately in the summer by the two major political parties, are the culmination of the first half of the process by which the two parties nominate their candidates. At the same time, it is the gong for the start of the second half, when the two parties' nominees compete for the presidency.

The Republicans chose Milwaukee, the largest city in the state (and a strong Democratic city), as the site of the convention to leverage their position in the closely contested state of Wisconsin. Democratic officials in Milwaukee also said they supported the Republican National Convention because of its economic benefits and increased visibility.

Although there was a speech by vice presidential nominee JD Vance accepting the nomination, the biggest star of the event was the nomination acceptance speech by

presidential candidate Donald Trump, who made his first public appearance since the assassination attempt. He mentioned his appreciation for Wisconsin several times. Among the 10 states served by the Consulate General of Chicago, speeches were also given by Governors Burgum of North Dakota and Noem of South Dakota, both of whom were once considered vice presidential candidates.

There was plenty of entertainment, and the mood inside and outside the venue was festive. The Wisconsin delegates all wore the cheese-shaped hats they wear when cheering on the Green Bay Packers, the local American football team. A policy platform has also been prepared as a pledge, and the rally is designed to unite the party and create an atmosphere of unity in preparation for the November primaries.

The Democratic National Convention is scheduled to be held in Chicago from August 19 to 22, and Vice President Harris is expected to become the presidential candidate, nominate a vice presidential candidate, and deliver a speech accepting the nomination by August 7. The Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's national security, and we will continue to closely monitor and follow the developments surrounding the presidential election.



In front of RNC



Large crowd inside

2 The Peace Garden State - North Dakota

On July 8-10, I visited North Dakota, the only one of the 10 Midwestern states that I am responsible for that I had not yet to visit. The state capital is named after Germany's first Chancellor Bismarck, who is credited with the unification of Germany. Since the late 1800s, the city has attracted a large number of German immigrants. The state's population is only about 800,000, probably due to the state's harsh climate. As a result of dealing with

this harsh climate North Dakotans are said to be very patient.

During the trip I also visited the headquarters of SB&B Foods (the founding family's home) and their factory/warehouse. The Sinner family immigrated to North Dakota from Germany in 1906 and starting farming there, the family is now on its fifth generation. The fourth generation of the family, Robert Sinner, began exporting soybeans (non-GMO) and spring wheat to Japan around 1989. These soybeans are used in Kyushu Co-op's tofu and in natto (fermented soybeans) and bread throughout Japan. Robert is known in Japan as "Bob-san," and as a "face to face" producer and exporter. I recently made natto at home using Bob's soybeans, it turned out great and had a really nice sheen to it. SB&B and Kyushu Co-op's partnership is one of the many business partnerships that exist between the U.S. and Japan and has lasted for more than 30 years. George Sinner, the family's third generation, was a former governor of the state and is the most recent governor of North Dakota from the Democratic Party.

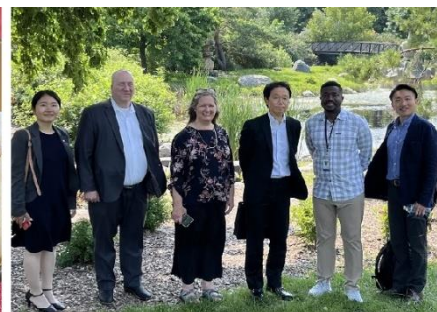
The city of Grand Forks, which has a sister-city relationship with Kanuma City in Tochigi Prefecture, has a Japanese garden that was donated by their Japanese sister city. During my visit to the Japanese garden, I met an American woman who had previously lived in Japan. She has remained engaged with Japan since returning to North Dakota. She has led students on visits to Kanuma City and also started a Japan Festival last year with the local JOI coordinator (a young person from Japan who is dispatched by the Japan Foundation to conduct grassroots exchanges in rural areas). This year, the festival will again be conducted almost entirely by the local community efforts and with local funding, with the exception of a grant from the Japan Foundation to invite taiko drummers. I am encouraged to see spontaneous grassroots exchanges taking place in an area that is not very easily accessible for our Consulate in Chicago or for our Honorary Consul in Minnesota.



With Bob.
Japanese Garden



Natto made from Bob's soybeans



With officials at the

3 Japan-related outreach from various people

On July 20th, I participated in the Ikebana Walk held in the Lakeview neighborhood by the Japanese Cultural Center, which is run by Mr. Stephen Toyoda who is Japanese-American. The event involves walking around and appreciating Ikenobo and Ohara-style flowers, as well as calligraphy and origami, set up in shops on both sides of the major street Southport Ave. Mr. Toyoda walked at the front holding a flag for the Japanese Cultural Center, and as time passed, the number of participants gradually increased. The Ikebana Walk was started in 2021 to allow the local community to experience Japanese culture even during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also supporting local economic activity. Lakeview is a neighborhood where many Japanese-Americans have lived. This annual event will not only pass on this historical bond, but also symbolizes the coexistence and prosperity of traditional Japanese art and the local community.

On July 25, I was privileged to deliver opening remarks at a panel discussion on Chiune Sugihara, co-sponsored by the Holocaust Museum and the Chicago Chapter of the American Jewish Society. Mr. Leo Melamed, known as the creator of the financial futures market, told the audience about his experience of fleeing Nazi persecution in Poland during World War II, obtaining a "life visa" from Vice Consul Chiune Sugihara in Lithuania, crossing Siberia, and arriving in Tsuruga, Japan. Mr. Nishikawa, Director of the Tsuruga Museum, Port of Humanity, also attended from Japan. The story of how visas issued by Chiune Sugihara saved tens of thousands of lives over several generations and how individual actions can change lives touched people's hearts.

On July 28th, I was invited to a tea ceremony hosted by Professor Emeritus Kimiko Gunji of the University of Illinois at the Anderson Japanese Gardens' Japanese Summer Festival. I am heartened that Japanese culture hubs in various regions, such as the Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford and the Japan House at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, do not just exist as individual points, but are connected to each other.。

On July 31st, I had an exchange of opinions with eight Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) Coordinators who just came from Japan and are undergoing post-arrival training in the United States. JOI is a program jointly implemented by the Japan Foundation and non-profit organizations in the United States. They are dispatched to various regions of the

United States for two years and are responsible for community-based exchanges in order to deepen interest and understanding of Japan. The foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance and global partnership is the bond of trust and friendship that has been cultivated over many years at the grassroots level. I have the opportunity to meet the JOI coordinator when I travel to each state on business trips. I have found that they have all truly blended into the local community and are making great contributions to cross-cultural understanding and continue to do great things.



Ikebana Walk



Chiune Sugihara event



Tea ceremony at Japanese garden