

# Enduring Treasures of Fellowship: AzLA/ Horner Japanese Exchange Fellowship

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A year has passed since my three week visit to Japan in April 1997. Since then my trip has continued to pay benefits through my ongoing correspondence with Japanese librarians and with the Yamabes, the Osaka family that has been such generous hosts for Fellowship recipients. Last fall Professor Shihota, library science professor from Osaka's St. Andrews University who has been indispensable in coordinating Fellowship visits, attended our 1997 Annual Conference. Associate Professor Kita of Osaka City University's Media Center accompanied him. We were deeply impressed by their interest in further developing their relationship with us despite having only a few days available for the trip. As Charlotte Cohen plans her own visit to Japan, many of us see excellent prospects for arranging even more frequent visits in both directions, and for developing other meaningful projects.



*Nagano Branch, Osaka Prefectural Library*

My flight from LA to Tokyo was lucky in that I met several Japanese citizens who gave me a head start on what to expect --one of whom even helped me with some sightseeing a few days later. In Tokyo, I stayed for several days in a hotel which was surprisingly affordable, about \$75/ night for a small room. Tokyo is huge, fantastically busy city reminding me at night of the movie Blade Runner, with blocks of buildings flashing neon, and crowds of people that make New York City look sleepy. The train and subway system seems to have about as many lines as we have streets in Tucson. In contrast though, there are also excellent parks. And cherry blossoms bloomed everywhere exactly during the time of my trip! I used over a dozen rolls of film.

The Japan Library Association arranged visits for me to an intriguing variety of libraries in the Tokyo area. Especially helpful were Ms. Yoshikiyo of JLA and Mr. Koizumi of Rikkyo University. After Tokyo, I stayed for three days with Mr. Kiuchi (whom you may remember from his Arizona visit in 1996) and his family in Chiba Prefecture east of Tokyo, touring the rocky coastline and visiting their local libraries. After riding the bullet train to Osaka, I visited another group of historic towns of Kyoto and Nara.

Overall, I visited about a dozen public, school and academic libraries. Some resembled our Carnegie-style libraries in architecture. Several were new, featuring advanced media labs and adaptive services for the blind and offering such facilities as community theaters and conference rooms, which brought a lot of people into the building. Public librarians expressed interest in our summer reading programs and enjoyed the sample incentive prizes I brought along. I sat in on storytime sessions with two elementary school classes and talked with them about Arizona and the Sonoran Desert. Several academic libraries were taking part in projects to record CD ROM images of old documents and art works. At the National Diet and other libraries I had their privilege of viewing collections of very old documents and artwork dating from as far back as the Century. At the time of my visit I found that Internet activities for individuals and libraries were in the early stages, due in my opinion to the relatively high telecommunication costs--even local calls are toll-based, at about the same prices as our long-distance calls. One elementary school has begun a pilot networking and Internet project; and I plan to follow up with them in their progress.



*Ichikawa Library*

Some other images I brought back: houses very close together in all habitable areas (not much yardwork!) interspersed with rice paddies; beautiful well-tended gardens and parks; people's conversational style of very active listening, saying hai (to repeatedly show understanding; bicycles everywhere; houses with mixed Japanese and Western style furnishings; traffic laws allowing motorcycles to weave in and out and move to the front of the line; 500-yen (about \$4) cups of coffee with no refills--perhaps my own greatest hardship; yet plenty of green tea; colorful, delicious meals; beautiful old temples and castles from the 14th century or before; the start of a new season of Japanese baseball fever; a haiku poet's

restored hut in the hills near Kyoto; waves of yellow hats on small school children taking field trips; the contrast between places like Tokyo and Osaka and old mountain gardens and temples; and Mt. Fuji rising in the mist.