

Letter From NEW YORKERS

Historical Japanese Lanterns

by Stacy Smith

During a bike ride through Kapaa Beach Park while in Kauai last month, I went to see the 15-foot cast concrete lantern, whose presence many on the bike path stop to read about. It was built in 1915 by Kauai's Japanese community to commemorate the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, and to honor the 1912 ascension to the throne of Emperor Taisho. Those pro-imperial sentiments were a problem for later Japanese-Americans, and in 1943 they buried the lantern to both protect it from vandalism during a time of anti-Japanese sentiment and to display pro-American loyalty. The lantern was damaged by having been buried and dug up twice during its lifetime, and it now stands at the end of a large field, where it is threatened by exposure to the elements. The Kauai Historical Society and the Kapaa Business Association hope to restore the lantern, but it is cost-prohibitive. (Fun fact: There is a newly opened matcha specialty store not too far from the lantern).



We have our very own Japanese lantern in Morningside Heights' Sakura Park. It was dedicated in 1960 as a gift of international friendship commemorating the Tokyo-New York sister city relationship. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden also boasts its own Japanese lantern by its pond. (Stacy Smith is a Japanese interpreter, translator and writer. Visit her website at www.stacysmith.webs.com or blog at jetwit.com/wordpress/category/wit-life.)



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THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Requital of a Favor After One Century Japanese-Turkish Friendship Concert "We will never forget their help."

A concert honoring Japanese-Turkish friendship was held at Carnegie Hall on November 29.

The event was organized by the Turkish + American Arts Society of New York with support from Mr. Seiji Mukaiyama (72), president of a gas production and sales company in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan. As an amateur musician, Mr. Mukaiyama started composing lyrics and classical music in 1998, impressed by the story of fishermen from Wakayama saving the Turkish crew of a stranded ship, and almost 100 years later, a Turkish plane rescuing Japanese people left in Iran just before an aerial bombardment as a repayment of favor.

The music was performed by New Manhattan Sinfonietta, conducted by Mr. Mukaiyama. In the first half, named "BY THE SKIN OF THEIR TEETH: ESCAPE FROM

TEHERAN", Ms. Nazli Alptekin, a Turkish soprano singer wearing a Japanese traditional kimono, sang in both Turkish and Japanese about the rescue of Japanese nationals stranded in Teheran in 1985. In the latter half, titled "ERTUGRUL TRAJECTORY", Ms.



From left: H.E. Mr. Serdar, KILIC Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the U.S., Mr. Mukaiyama, Mr. Kanji Yamanouchi, Consul-General of Japan in New York

Alptekin was joined by the Desoff Choirs, based in New York, and the orchestra played music in the theme of the tragedy of Ertugrul and the friendship of the two countries. The Master of Ceremonies was Mr. Halit Mizrakli, a Associate Professor at Chiba University of Commerce, Japan.

In the stage background, photographs of the Turkish plane rescuing Japanese people, as well as photos of Ambassadors of Turkey in Japan visiting the Ertugrul memorial monument in Wakayama, were exhibited so that the audience could understand the friendship between the two countries through music and images.

In addition, Mr. Junichi Numata (76), who was rescued by the Turkish airplane, and two of the cabin attendants who participated in the mission appeared on stage. "In the same way that Turkish people don't forget about the episode of Ertugrul, I cannot thank Turkey enough for helping us. I will tell this story of friendship to people all over the world. Please share what you heard today with others", Numata, who lived in Teheran as an employee of Nissan, said emotionally.

At the end, the Circle Wind Boys & Girls Choir performed a song for mourning Ertugrul, and the curtain was closed in hopes of world peace.

A Turkish member of the audience



Mr. Numata

said, "I heard from my father that Japan and Turkey are close, but I never knew such a story. It should be handed down to many people."



The Stranding of Ertugrul

In 1890, by the imperial order of the sultan Abdul Hamid II of the Ottoman Empire (present Turkey), a mission of 587 people left Istanbul in "Ertugrul" with the objective of presenting a Medal of Honor to Emperor Meiji, who arrived in Japan after 11 months of navigation.

During its return voyage, the ship was caught in a storm, and run aground off Wakayama. Local fishermen saved 69 lives, despite the rough conditions of the sea. Thus, the catastrophe that caused the deaths of more than 500 people became the origin of the Turkish-Japanese long-lasting friendship.

A memorial monument of Ertugrul was built in Kushimoto town, Wakayama Prefecture, and a memorial ceremony has been held every five years under the co-sponsorship of the town and the Turkish Embassy in Japan.

Rescue of Japanese Residents in Teheran

The Iran-Iraq War broke out in 1980. In March 1985, the then President Hussein of Iraq declared that he would begin to indiscriminately attack, after a 48-hour grace period, all the planes passing over its territory. Foreigners who were stationed in Iran rushed toward the Teheran Airport.

While other countries sent airplanes to rescue their own people, Japan was not able to do so because military activities were not permitted, and the Japanese people were left behind.

With the deadline approaching, a plane came flying. It was a Turkish plane with the mission of saving the Japanese nationals. The slogan of the pilots was: "Do not forget the favor received for Ertugrul". Just 75 minutes before the announced attack, all 216 Japanese were evacuated safely toward Turkey, and then returned to Japan.

(Photograph from the display in the Nippon Club; Article by Kaoru Komi/Photograph by Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Mami Sakurai)

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