

Remarks by Eiichi Kawahara Consul General  
on Emperor's Birthday Reception  
on Dec.5, 2012 at his residence)

Hon. Jim Cason, Mayor of the City of Coral Gables,  
 Distinguished Guests,  
 皆様、ようこそお越し頂きました。

Thank you all for joining us in celebration of Japan's national day, which is a celebration for the birthday of H.M. the Emperor of Japan.



H.M. the Emperor was born in 1933; this year will be his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Another important celebration this year was the first centenary anniversary of Japan's Sakura (Cherry Trees) Gift to the United States. Last March 30<sup>th</sup>, 100 young cherry trees were planted in Pensacola to mark the first centenary of this gift.

A beautiful anniversary ceremony was hosted by UWF President, Dr. Bense, with the attendance of Congressman, representatives of local governments, hundreds of UWF students, citizens of Pensacola, and middle school students from Gero City of Japan. This first centenary was celebrated around the U.S. with ceremonies and festivals.

This year also marks 20 years of service for our consulate here in Miami. Our chancellery was opened in 1992. I am 9<sup>th</sup> Japanese Consul General. Our mission and relation with Florida have expanded greatly in these last twenty years.

We are grateful to all those who have contributed and collaborated with our Consulate during the last two decades.

This year, Japan has started a new youth exchange program called "Kizuna Project". "Kizuna" means human bonds in Japanese. One-thousand American High School students visited several cities in Japan

this summer for two weeks; they went to Tohoku in the northeastern part of Japan, Tokyo, Nagoya, and Kansai in the west.

Twenty three students from Broward County participated in this program. They told us upon their return how wonderful had been the experience to share and stay in the homes of their Japanese peers. They enjoyed many aspects of Japan, traditions, customs, historical sites and modern aspect of Japan, all of this was a whole new and eye-opening experience.

To reciprocate the American students visit to Japan, one thousand Japanese high school students will visit the U.S. in separate groups. A group of students will visit South Florida next March. I am sure the project will further enhance our already very close relations.

This past September, Southeast U.S./Japan Association had a wonderful joint meeting in Tokyo with its Japanese counterpart Japan-U.S. Southeast Association. The State Secretary of Florida, Hon. Ken Detzner, and Florida business representatives led by Mr. George Gable participated in this 35<sup>th</sup> Joint Annual Session.

Hundreds of business people from the seven southeastern states of U.S. participated in the meeting.

It was a very valuable exchange of views between the Japanese and American business people on broad topics, among others, disaster prevention/mitigation, and energy conservation business.

Our sister-cities in Florida have actively promoted youth exchange program.

This year, Mayor of Delray Beach, Hon. McDuffie and Sister City in Japan, Miyazu City Mayor Inoue celebrated the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their sister city relations by sending missions to each other city.

As I mentioned earlier when talking of the celebrations in Pensacola, 19<sup>th</sup> middle school students mission from City of Gero were sent to Pensacola on an youth exchange program and joined the Sakura anniversary ceremony.

In mid-September, my wife and I visited Gero City to thank its citizens for their generous contribution to the Sakura first centenary anniversary.

Also this year, Sister Cities Kagoshima, Japan, and Miami City have engaged in student exchange program at grass root level.

It is gratifying for us to observe how active people to people exchanges at federal, state and local community level are taking place thanks to the dedicated efforts of the respective sister-cities committees and members of the community.

We are pleased to have with us today a very active Japanese lady, Shigeeko Honda Sensei. Mme. Honda is the Director of UWF Japan Center, and she has been actively promoting Japan-US student exchange programs for many years in Pensacola.



*(Photo: from left hand side; Honda Sensei, myself, Mrs. Bush, and my wife)*

Right after my remarks, I have an honor to convey to Honda Sensei an Award from Japanese Foreign Minister for her continuous efforts and contributions towards bringing Japan and U.S. closer through student exchange.

Today, we are also happy to share with you a bit of Japanese culture through a drum (Taiko) performance, which will follow after the Kagami-wari and the toast. Also, especially good Sake from Gero City in Japan will be served for tasting. *(Photo from right hand side; Mr. Jim Cason, Mayor of Coral Gables, Honda Sensei, Mrs. Bush, and myself)*



I hope you will enjoy our national day celebration.

Thank you.