



Sister City News

Palmer, Alaska - Saroma, Japan

❄ Winter

2013

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Sister City History - The Beginning

By Heather Kelley - with help from family journals, newspaper articles, and city publications

In August of 1977, Edward Holmes of Palmer, Alaska, made contact with Mutsuhiro Ishiguro of Saroma, Japan via ham radio.

Ed's granddaughter, Tanya Lang, recently recollected: "As far back as I can remember my grandfather was always talking on his ham radio. My grandfather loved meeting people and he loved learning about different places. Ham radio was perfect for him as he got both. He talked to people all over the world, at all hours of the day and night."

Those frequent communications eventually led Ed to visit Saroma in April of 1980. Ed kept a detailed journal of his visit which includes the following excerpts:

"We boarded a train for Saroma Town...It was beautiful countryside and reminded me very much of the Matanuska Valley."

"I was quite impressed with the school and music class and also journalism class..."

"Dinner (at a large welcome party) was great and had so much food it was hard to stay on any diet. I was also made an honorary member of the Saroma Radio Club."



Mutsuhiro & Family w/ Ed & granddaughter Tanya
Spring 1984

"I hated to go and wished my trip could have been for longer. As the train pulled away from the station many amateur radio operators stood on the platform waving good bye to me..."

In May of 1980 it was decided that Palmer and Saroma would become Sister Cities. In October of the same year, a delegation from Saroma visited Palmer and signed the Sister City charter.

Tanya reflects that her grandfather "... could have chosen any of the hundreds of ham radio operators he knew to begin a sister city program, but he found that the communities of Saroma

and Palmer were very similar in both community and culture."

Over the years there have been many visits between the two cities. These visits have included short and long student exchanges, work study exchanges, language teacher exchanges, official delegations, and simply friends visiting friends.

Ed Holmes passed away in January of 1987. One of many condolences sent from Japan to his wife Ruth read: "I'm very shocked to hear Edward Holmes has gone. Please accept my sincere condolences. He was the father

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Quarterly Calendar of Events

Sister City Community Event

The annual Palmer Saroma Kai meeting (2 - 3 pm) and a celebration of the Sister City relationship (4 - 7 pm) will be held **January 11th** at the Palmer Library. For more information see the article on the back page of this newsletter.

Japanese Language Classes

Mat-Su College continues to offer Japanese Classes next spring from 1/13/14 through 5/5/14.

First Year Japanese II (4CR)

Mon & Wed - 7 to 9:45pm

For more info visit:

<http://matsu.alaska.edu/>

Applications Available Soon for 2014 Student Delegation to Saroma

Students from Palmer Jr/ Middle School and Palmer High School will be visiting Saroma during the summer of 2014. Applications will be available soon. Please contact Assistant Principal Claudia Berkley at PJMS or Assistant Principal Garth Morgan at PHS for more information.

Sister City History - The Beginning

(Continued from Page 1)

of the Sister City relationship between Palmer and Saroma. I wish to express my deep appreciation for his great work. Words fail at a time like this. I'm praying that you will be given strength and comfort in your hours of grief. May his soul rest in peace."

~ Chouichiro Funaki

then Mayor of Saroma

The friendship that Ed and Mutsuhiro helped start back in 1980 is now quickly approaching its 35th anniversary. It is a friendship that has touched and even transformed many lives.

In Tanya's words: "The persistence of two wonderful men

made this relationship possible; because of Edward Holmes and Mutsuhiro Ishiguro our lives are forever changed for the better."

Their legacy will live on as future generations experience the friendship of our two cities.



Letters from Japan over the years.



Ed and Tanya talking on the ham radio on Dec 25, 1976.

The Gift of Friendship

By Heather Kelley

In September 2013, the Palmer Museum hosted a wonderful display of Sister City artifacts in celebration of Palmer and Saroma friendship. Many thanks to Selena Ortega-Chiolero, Executive Director at the Palmer Museum, as well as the rest of the museum's staff and volunteers for all their hard work, dedication, and support of the Palmer Saroma Sister City Relationship.



Selena Ortega-Chiolero - Executive Director at the Palmer Museum



Sister City Artifacts

Language Corner

By Carla Swick

If you are sending Christmas cards to Japan, try inserting a traditional Japanese New Year greeting.

Akemashite Omedetou Gozaimasu. あけましておめでとうございます。Happy New Year.

Yoi toshi de arimasu youni. よい年でありますように。May you have a good year.

Kotoshi mo yoroshiku onegai shimasu. 今年もよろしくおねがいします。May our relationship continue to be prosperous this year too.

Saroma to Palmer - Exchange Highlights

By Saroma Students, Saroma Chaperone Yuko Hirouchi, & Palmer Jr/Middle School Teacher Christel Mozalevskiy

In September 2013, five students (Yuto Honda, Ryunosuke Sumiyoshi, Ruan Koriyama, Reo Gaman, and Tsugumi Otani) and two chaperons (Yuko Hirouchi & Keijii Gunji) visited Palmer. They spent nine days participating in school activities and living with Alaskan host families. Below are some highlights from their visit.

Tsugumi Otani

Saroma Jr High - 8th Grader

My days in Palmer were so full and complete with activities. From the glacier climb, touring Palmer, and shopping, to visiting the Art Walk, to making glass art, and having a sleepover at Ruan's host family's home, every day was busy.

By actually going to Palmer myself, I personally felt how important it is for us to have Palmer as our sister city. I also learned about the importance of family, and what it means to have true friends. I learned a lot of things that I could not have if I had stayed in my own country. I hope that I can make use of these valuable experiences in many different ways in my own life.

Ryunosuke Sumiyoshi

Saroma Jr High - 8th Grader

When students from Palmer visited in the summer, I tried talking to them. They spoke fast and I wasn't sure what they were saying at first, but day by day I began to understand them better. When I visited Palmer myself, I realized how much effort and confidence you need

to communicate in a foreign environment. I was surprised at first and couldn't speak at all. But my host family was so patient and friendly, that I was able to communicate with them.

Reo Gaman

Saroma Jr High - 8th Grader

From going to Palmer, I learned how much the people there cared for me and for others and how hard they work for many things.

Ruan Koriyama

Saroma Jr High - 8th Grader

I really enjoyed the girls sleepover that we had with our host students. There was a campfire and we went for a walk around the house. After everyone came back home, we made Japanese food. I was worried whether everyone would like it or not, but luckily everyone said it was delicious.

I was really nervous and uneasy about doing this exchange, but once I arrived in Palmer, I had so much fun. It seemed too short. If I have another chance, I want to visit Palmer again.

Yuko Hirouchi

Chaperone

Thank you very much everyone who supports sister city and sister school program. Whenever I visit Palmer, I always appreciate having such an amazing friendship. Always growing with love and good will. Thank you our sister city and our other home town, PALMER!

Christel Mozalevskiy

Palmer Jr/Mid School Teacher

The 2013 sister city exchange is a memory my students will not soon forget. The experience was shared in a great capacity with my geography students as we took a few weeks discussing and experiencing the culture of Japan. In preparation for the arrival of the exchange students, my class was eager as they worked long and hard writing phrases in hiragana and katakana as well as drawing popular characters such as Domo Kun. The most memorable experience of the exchange was the sushi making day. Students worked with the exchange students and PJMS Assistant Principal, Claudia Berkeley, to assemble, roll, and eat sushi of their own making. It was exciting to see Palmer students excited about the Japanese culture, the sister city program, and the desire to connect with students in Saroma. The exchange program is such an incredible relationship unique to Palmer and I am proud to say, the sister city spirit is very much alive.



Ryunosuke & Palmer Police Officer Ed Mooney



Ruan & Tsugumi at Radio Free Palmer



Yuto, Reo, Ryunosuke, and Vice-Principal Keijii Gunji at Downtown Deli.

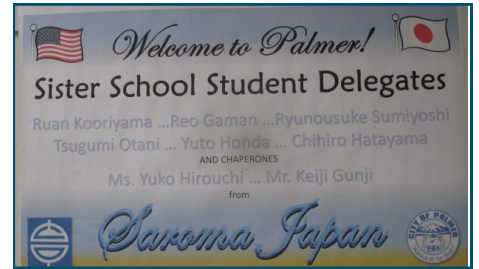
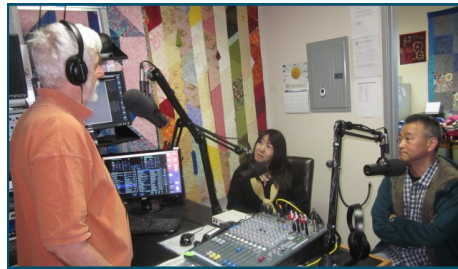
"If I have another chance, I want to visit Palmer again."

Ruan Koriyama



Saroma Exchange Students at the Memanbetsu Airport - (l to r) Yuto Honda (SHS - 11th), Ryunosuke Sumiyoshi. (SJHS - 8th), Ruan Koriyama (SJHS - 8th), Tsugumi Otani (SJHS - 8th), and Reo Gaman (SJHS - 8th).

Saroma to Palmer - Exchange Photos



Christmas in Saroma

By Sean Holland

As I write this, Christmas is fast approaching, and even here in Japan, there are many reminders. Japan celebrates Christmas in the same way it celebrates Halloween - as an excuse to have a party, eat a bit of unhealthy food, and a new way for businesses to advertise.

However, because Thanksgiving is completely unknown in Japan, there is nothing to act as a buffer between the spookiness of Halloween and the cheer of Christmas. Any American living in Japan will surely lament an entire November of Christmas music and Santa displays at the grocery store. And once the day does come, it's celebrated very differently. Living abroad over Christmas time makes one realize the effort that goes into this kind of tradition, and the importance of maintaining it.

Japan has its own Christmas traditions, which may seem rather amusing to someone used to Western-style Christmas:

Christmas Eve is romantic.

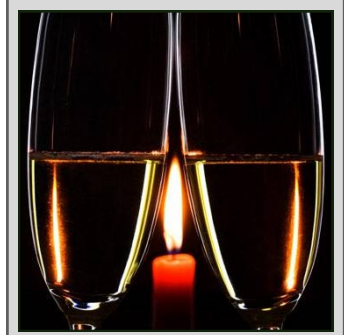
That's right, the night before Christmas is not a night of peaceful reflection and quality time with family. With so few Christians in Japan, the religious meaning isn't there. It's a date night, pure and simple.

Christmas is all about the Christmas Cake. This tradition of eating a heavy fruit or sponge cake comes from the United Kingdom and the countries of the Commonwealth and is widespread in Japan. While America has a tradition of giving fruitcakes, the Japanese take their cakes much more seriously, often ordering them weeks ahead of time.

Christmas is also all about... fried chicken. At some point, it became common knowledge in Japan that this is what you eat on Christmas. Whether it stems from a misunderstanding of the turkey and poultry culinary traditions of the winter holidays, or a genius marketing ploy by KFC, a bucket of fried chicken is how a Japanese family rings in the holiday.

Christmas Day is not a national holiday. People go to work, and children go to school. Being raised to think of the day as special and a time for many important things - none of them work - it is very odd to go to teach class or sit in an office on Christmas Day as if it were a day like any other.

All of this is not to say that the Japanese do not celebrate family and food and fun over the dark days of winter. A lot of the traditions that Western nations take care of on December 25th are just done a bit later by Japanese families, over the new year. That's the time when you lie around the house, gain a few pounds from non-stop feasting, and make the long trip home through snowstorms and icy roads to share the physical and spiritual bonds of family. With that to look forward to only a week later, Christmas sounds like a pretty nice excuse for a romantic plate of fried chicken topped off with a slice of cake, doesn't it?



At the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Sister City program, Saroma gave Palmer a beautiful koto, a traditional Japanese stringed musical instrument. While visiting Palmer in September, Yuko Hirouchi played the koto at an event at the Palmer Museum.

"Music is the universal language of mankind."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Cultural Corner

Information from Wikipedia

The koto (箏) is a traditional Japanese stringed musical instrument, similar to the Chinese zheng. The koto is the national instrument of Japan. Koto are about 180 cm (71 in) length, and made from kiri wood. They have 13

strings that are strung over 13 movable bridges along the width of the instrument. Players can adjust the string pitches by moving these bridges before playing, and use three finger picks (on thumb, index finger, and middle finger) to pluck the

strings. Perhaps the most important influence on the koto was Yatsunashi Kengyo (1614–1685). He was a gifted blind musician from Kyoto who changed the limited selection of six songs to a brand new style of koto music which he called kumi uta.



Close-up photo of Yuko playing the koto at the Palmer Museum in September 2013.

Please Join Us for a Sister City Community Event

January 11th, 2014 from 2-7pm

By Heather Kelley



Palmer Saroma Kai will be hosting a community event at the **Palmer Library** (655 S Valley Way, Palmer) on **Saturday January 11, 2014** from 2 - 7 pm.



The event will begin with the annual Palmer Saroma Kai meeting, which will include reports from the board president and treasurer as well as board members elections. This meeting will run from 2 - 3 pm.

Then from 3 - 7 pm we will be participating in the Palmer Museum's **Second Saturday Art Walk** event. Stop by and warm up with a cup of green tea, try your hand at calligraphy, or fold origami cranes to help us create a string of 1000 cranes to send to Japan. An ancient Japanese legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish. Today they are frequently created as wish for world peace.



Strings of cranes at the Palmer Museum in September.

The Sister City Program, established in 1980, works together with the Sister Schools Program in the cities of Palmer, Alaska and Saroma, Japan, to promote cultural enlightenment, student and teacher exchanges, international good will and lasting relationships between cities.

This newsletter is published by Palmer Saroma Kai, an organization that provides encouragement and support for the relationship between the Sister Cities of Palmer, Alaska and Saroma, Japan.

To submit articles, photos, or items of public interest, please contact Carla Swick at carlaswick2010@gmail.com or by phone 907-775-0807.

Your comments, suggestions, and constructive feedback are welcome!