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# JETRO Chicago Midwest NEWSLETTER

Illinois • Indiana • Iowa • Kansas • Michigan • Minnesota • Missouri • Nebraska • North Dakota • Ohio • South Dakota • Wisconsin

## Greetings from the Consul-General of Japan in Chicago



Kenichi Okada  
Consul-General of Japan in  
Chicago

Dear Friends,

I was appointed as Consul-General of Japan in Chicago on October 14th 2019. Everybody that I have met has told me that the winters here are severely cold, but the people are very warm and kind. Already in my travels around the Midwest, I have realized that “the outside being freezing cold, while having warmth in one’s heart” is the true characteristic of the Heartland of America.

This is my sixth overseas assignment. My previous postings include the Embassies of Japan in China, the U.S., and the Republic of Korea; the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association in Taipei; and the Consulate-General of Japan in Shanghai.

I’m really excited to be in Chicago, not only because of the world famous sports, food and culture, but because this is a really significant moment in the Japan – Midwest partnership.

See “Consul-General,” page 6

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## “The U.S.-Japan Relationship is the Most Important Bilateral Relationship – BAR NONE!”

“The U.S.-Japan relationship is the most important bilateral relationship – BAR NONE!” Our dear Mike Mansfield, America’s longest serving U.S. Ambassador to Japan (1977-1988) made this prescient statement. And our own, Andrew Schilling, International Director for Business Development at the Greater Omaha Chamber actually worked under his leadership at the U.S. Embassy in Japan. I write this because The Japan Foundation’s GEN-J program enabled Andy to return to Japan this autumn after more than 30 years. I encourage you to read his article in our newsletter. Andy Schilling was in a sense a witness to history and saw first-hand the persona of Ambassador Mike Mansfield going full throttle in Japan.



From the  
Chief  
Executive  
Director

Ralph Inforzato  
Chief Executive Director,  
JETRO Chicago

Please remember during this time in the late 1980s and early 1990s, we in the Midwest were told time and time again of the consequences of Japan’s financial bubble collapse and the negative impact it would soon have on Japanese investment in the United States. We politely listened to experts from the Beltway and New York flying into Chicago and Indianapolis to explain their forecasts of Japan’s economic demise.

See “Chief Executive Director,” page 8

## A View of Japan 30 Years Later: My Participation in the Japan Foundation’s GEN-J Program



### Guest View

Andrew Schilling  
Senior Director,  
International Business  
Development, Greater  
Omaha Chamber

“The U.S.-Japan relationship is the most important bilateral relationship – BAR NONE!” Thirty years ago, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Mike Mansfield ended every speech with that quote. And 30 years later, Mansfield’s words are still ringing out – only now, it’s the Japanese themselves who quote them.

As I saw in a recent trip to Japan, the resilience of Mansfield’s quote is one of

the few things that have not changed in the 30 years since I last served in Japan as a U.S. diplomat.

I returned to Japan in October, thanks to a grant from the Japan Foundation to participate in the Grassroots Exchange Network [GEN-J] program, which aims to “further enhance the global partnership between the U.S. and Japan,” particularly on local and regional levels. I was already familiar with Japan from my time as a diplomat, but now, as the Greater Omaha Chamber’s director for international business development, I was drawn to the program to develop and expand community and business ties between Nebraska and Japan. The GEN-J program presented numerous

See “Guest View: Schilling,” page 7

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### Japanese Business Seminars

JETRO Chicago recently held a series of seminars for Japanese businesses in the Midwest. At left, in Columbus, Ohio; center, in Chicago; and at right, in Novi, Michigan.



### Ohio Leadership Meet and Greet with Japanese Company Representatives, in Columbus, OH on August 22



Front row, from left: Hiroyuki Fujita, Honorary Consul of Japan in Cleveland; Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine; Tom Shoupe, Senior V.P. and COO, Honda of America Mfg., Inc.; and J.P. Nauseef, President and CIO, JobsOhio.

Ralph Inforato had a chance to spend time with Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, and First Lady Fran DeWine, on August 22 at the reception in Columbus, Ohio, hosted by the Governor.



Radius Indiana visits JETRO Chicago on July 24, and meets with Tsubasa Hashimoto and Kelly Highland.



On a visit to Lansing, Michigan on September 24, Governor Gretchen Whitmer looks over a special edition of the JETRO Chicago Midwest Newsletter, presented by JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato (right) and Hidemi "Andy" Saito (left).



### JETRO Chicago Celebrates 60 Years

On Tuesday, November 19, JETRO Chicago hosted a reception to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the opening of the Chicago office.



Consul-General of Japan in Chicago Kenichi Okada offers his congratulations to JETRO Chicago.



JETRO Chicago Chief Executive Director Ralph Inforzato with Consul-General of Japan in Chicago Kenichi Okada; Joe Wellman, Mayor of Washington, Indiana; and Larry Ingraham, Ingraham & Associates.



The JETRO Chicago team celebrates 60 years of success!



Ryo Kamisaku, President of JCCC spoke of the organization's long-standing partnership with JETRO.



David Cook, Honorary Consul of Japan in Columbus, Ohio offers his congratulations to Ralph Inforzato.



May Chashiro offered greetings from Consul-General Tsutomu Nakagawa, Consulate-General of Japan in Detroit.



Andrea Richter, Vice President, International Engagement, Indiana Economic Development Corporation with Ralph Inforzato.



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## 51st Annual Japan-Midwest U.S. Conference in Tokyo

The Japan-Midwest U.S. Association and Midwest U.S.-Japan Association held their 2019 Conference at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, from September 8-10. It was attended by hundreds of dignitaries, business leaders from both the United States and Japan. Here are a few photos from the event.



*Yuzaburo Mogi, Honorary CEO and Chairman of the Board, Kikkoman Corporation is at the podium, for a panel presentation moderated by JETRO Chairman Nobubiko Sasaki, and featuring: Takeo Inokuchi, Senior Advisor, Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Co., Ltd.; Ron Jones, Senior Principal, CLAYCO/Lamar Johnson Collaborative; Shigeru Yamazoe, Vice Chairman, Marubeni Corporation; Peter Jenkins, President, Dow Japan and Korea, Associate General Counsel, Dow Chemical Japan*



*JETRO Chairman Nobubiko Sasaki with Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers*



*JETRO Chairman Nobubiko Sasaki with Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts*



*Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb with JETRO Chairman Nobubiko Sasaki*



*Dignitaries at the 51st Annual Joint Meeting of the Japan-Midwest U.S. and Midwest U.S.-Japan Associations in Tokyo, from September 8-10, 2019.*



*Ralph Inforzato with Governor of Minnesota Tim Walz, JETRO Chairman Nobubiko Sasaki, and Steve Grove, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development*



*Robert Corder, Battle Creek Unlimited; Kelly Highland, JETRO Chicago; Larry Ingraham, Ingraham and Associates; Yoshio Shibazaki, Plante & Moran PLLC*



*JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato with Dan Hynes, Illinois Deputy Governor; JETRO Chairman Nobubiko Sasaki; Anne Caprara, Illinois Governor's Chief of Staff; and Margo Markopoulos, Deputy Director, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity*

### Contact JETRO Chicago • [www.jetro.go.jp/usa/](http://www.jetro.go.jp/usa/)

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For general information, call the number above.

The JETRO Chicago team offers a wide variety of business support services for companies in the Midwest planning to initiate a business presence or seeking to add to their existing investment in Japan, and/or work with Japanese companies. Please feel free to contact us.

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## Ohio Mayors Reflect on their Successful Visits to Japan

*Interviews and article prepared by Kelly Highland, JETRO Chicago*

For **J.R. Rausch, the Mayor of Marysville, Ohio**, the relationship between Ohio and Japan and Marysville and Japan, is extremely important. This past September, Mayor Rausch visited Japan for the 3rd time; his first visit was six years ago. Knowing the significance of maintaining and strengthening the already existing relationships Marysville and Union County have with Japanese companies, Mayor Rausch and his colleagues planned their trip to include 13 days in Japan – Seven days for company visits; Three days for the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference; and Three days to spend in their Friendship City, which is Yorii, located in Saitama Prefecture. Accompanying Mayor Rausch on this visit included: Union County Commissioner Chris Schmenk, Marysville Vice President of Council Henk Berbee, Marysville City Manager Terry Emery, Honda Representative Caroline Ramsey, Marysville Early College High School Principal Kenny Chaffin, and Union County/Marysville Economic Development Director Eric Phillips.



*J.R. Rausch, Mayor of Marysville, Ohio, with JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato.*

In Marysville and Union County, 24 Japanese companies have committed to investing in this region. In Marysville, 25% of the workforce is employed by Japanese companies, while 46% of the workforce in Union County is employed by foreign companies, Japan being the number one employer.

This group of delegates from Marysville and Union County met with 13 Japanese companies. On this particular visit, they were able to meet with high-level executives and decision makers. Mayor Rausch noted that as their relationships grow, so do the level of their meetings. During this trip, they learned that two Japanese companies will be expanding their facilities in Marysville.

The highlight of their meetings took place with Toshiaki Mikoshiba, Chairman and Director of the headquarters of Honda Motor Co., Ltd. The significance of this meeting took place on September 10th, which was the 40th anniversary of Honda's establishment in Marysville. In commemoration of this huge milestone, Mayor Rausch and his colleagues presented a proclamation to Chairman Mikoshiba from four counties and seven municipalities in Ohio that Honda had an influence. On September 11th Governor Mike DeWine met with Chairman Mikoshiba and he told Ohio Governor DeWine that he was grateful and honored to have received the proclamation.

Next on their agenda was attending the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference. They were part of a 60 person Ohio delegation led by Governor Mike DeWine, who strongly indicated that he wanted his first overseas mission to be Japan. There were 350 attendees at this conference and the State of Ohio had the largest state delegation. This showed their Japanese friends the commitment Ohio has with their Japanese counterparts. Mayor Rausch indicated that this was the best delegation that he has been a part of because the atmosphere was significantly different under Governor DeWine's leadership. Mayor Rausch indicated the governor's speech at the conference was astounding - it helped to connect the relationships they have with their Japanese investors. Also for the first time, the conference arranged for a two hour meet and greet session for Japanese companies not attending the conference, to meet with the Midwest delegates.

On September 10th JETRO and JobsOhio co-organized an Invest in Ohio program held at JETRO Tokyo and more than 100 Japanese companies were in attendance. Mayor Rausch found this program to be excellent and he appreciated the opportunity to network with Japanese companies not attending the conference.

The final part of their itinerary included a visit to their Friendship City, Yorii, located in Saitama Prefecture. This relationship was established in 2013 at which time, Japanese language was not offered in Marysville schools. Now in 2019, Marysville schools have the largest Japanese language program in the entire State of Ohio. In six years, 57 students have been a part of the Marysville-Yorii exchange program. Each year 10 students are chosen to participate in the program. For example, in 2020 ten students from Ohio will visit Japan and in 2021 ten students from Yorii will visit Ohio.

An example of the close relationship between Yorii and Marysville, is during this past August when Marysville celebrated its 200th birthday. Mayor Hanawa of Yorii and Assembly Chairperson Minegishi specifically travelled to Marysville for only three days in order to join this special celebration. A true commitment of friendship and respect exists between these two cities.

In conclusion, Mayor Rausch's message to Japanese companies interested in investing in Marysville and Union County is that they are open for business and will welcome them with open arms. They truly value all of their foreign investments.

For **Ben Stahler, Mayor of Bellefontaine, Ohio**, his trip this past September was the fourth visit to Japan and the second to attend the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference in Tokyo, Mayor Stahler was a part of the Ohio delegation led by Governor Mike DeWine. However, there were three other members who joined Mayor Stahler as part of the Logan County team, and they included: John Bayless, Logan County Commissioner; Ben Volrath, Logan County Economic Development Director; and Zeb Wagner, President of the Bellefontaine City Council. This was the first time for these Logan County representatives to visit Japan.



*Ben Stahler, Mayor of Bellefontaine, Ohio.*

This visit to Japan went extremely well for this four person Logan County leadership group and all of their expectations were most definitely exceeded.

Ohio has the greatest amount of Japanese investment, second only to the State of California. Currently, there are 70,000+ Ohioans working for Japanese companies. The importance of Japanese investment in Ohio is duly noted by Governor DeWine and he proudly represented the State of Ohio as he led the largest Midwest state delegation attending the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference.

Mayor Stahler and the Logan County delegation spent a total of nine nights in Japan and had a very active schedule. There were four aspects to their visit:

1) Corporate Visits – They arrived five days in advance in order to meet with all of the Japanese companies invested in Bellefontaine and Logan County. They made seven corporate visits in total and spent no more than one hour at each company. They shared economic news and expressed their gratitude, not just for their investment, but for what these Japanese Companies give back to the community.



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## JETRO Briefs Ohio Delegation Prior to Tokyo Visit

Prepared by Kikuko Ono Hanashiro, JETRO Chicago

Ohio Governor, Mike DeWine, along with a delegation of approximately 60 officials traveled to Japan in early September to attend the Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference.



*Kikuko Ono Hanashiro, JETRO Grassroots Outreach Coordinator in Ohio, on August 22.*

Approximately half of the delegation was from Central Ohio, and prior to their departure for Japan, JETRO representatives provided a briefing session which included information on the Japanese economy, business etiquette and culture. The Central Ohio delegation attended the session which was held at the Honda Heritage Center in Marysville, Ohio.

Ralph Inforzato, Chief Executive Director at JETRO Chicago, began the session with a macro point of view of the economic relationship between Japan and the U.S., followed by a presentation from Kikuko Ono Hanashiro, Grassroots Outreach Coordinator in Ohio. Her focus was on business etiquette and culture, which covered a variety of areas: There was role-playing teaching the group how to bow and how deep to bow; the appropriate way to exchange business cards; the importance of building relationships with Japanese companies; and the proper way to pronounce Kampai, just to name a few. Since this would be the first time for many of the delegates to visit Japan, questions were raised without end.

We were honored to serve the Central Ohio Leadership.

## Ohio-Japan Investment Dynamic Seminar in Tokyo, September 10



*Ohio Governor Mike DeWine with JETRO Chairman Nobuhiko Sasaki*



*Ohio Governor Mike DeWine greets seminar speaker Toshiyuki Sugimoto, President, THK Manufacturing of America, Inc.*



*JobsOhio President and Chief Investment Officer J.P. Nauseef addresses the seminar.*

*Ohio Governor Mike DeWine greets seminar speaker Satoru Tanaka, Executive Officer, President, Consumer Products America and EMEA, Kao Corporation*



## Ohio Mayors ... from page 4

2) Midwest U.S.-Japan Association Conference – This was the second time for Mayor Stahler to attend this conference in Tokyo. The importance of this conference was very much appreciated. The Bellefontaine and Logan County delegates were part of the entire Ohio delegation led by Governor Mike DeWine. This was the first time in a decade that an Ohio governor led a delegation to Japan. And this was the first overseas mission for Governor Mike DeWine, and he insisted Japan be his first country to visit.

3) Sister City Relationship – 28 years ago, Bellefontaine established a Sister City Relationship with Suzuka, located in Mie Prefecture. There is a student exchange program which takes place every other year. This year, several Bellefontaine families hosted students from Suzuka. This program gives the students a taste of life in the Midwest.

4) Invest in Ohio Seminar – Not only Mayor Stahler and his Logan County colleagues, but the entire Ohio delegation appreciated JETRO hosting this seminar at their Tokyo Headquarters on September 10th. There were 100+ Japanese companies in attendance and many new relationships were formed. Those on the agenda included JETRO Chairman Nobuhiko Sasaki, Governor Mike DeWine, JobsOhio President and Chief Investment

Officer J.P. Nauseef, JETRO Chicago Chief Executive Director Ralph Inforzato, JETRO Chicago Director of Public Affairs Tsubasa Hashimoto, THK Manufacturing of America President Toshiyuki Sugimoto, Kao Corporation Executive Officer and President of Consumer Products Americas Satoru Tanaka, and Hitachi Healthcare Americas President Yasuhiko Taniguchi. This program provided much value.

Following the investment seminar, Mayor Stahler and his colleagues from Marysville and surrounding counties visited the headquarters of Honda Motor Co., Ltd., and met with Toshiaki Mikoshiba, Chairman and Director. Forty years ago on September 10, 1979, Honda took a chance and built the first motorcycle not on Japanese soil in Marysville, Ohio. And this was the beginning for Honda of America Manufacturing, Inc.

Prior to their departure for Japan, Consul General Tsutomu Nakagawa from the Consulate General of Japan in Detroit visited Mayor Stahler and his colleagues. He provided them with guidance and told them to stress the importance of community to the Japanese companies they meet.

In conclusion, it is not all about obtaining new investment and new jobs; it is about maintaining, strengthening and appreciating the already existing Japanese companies and the friendship and value they add to Bellefontaine and Logan County.

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## Events Put the Spotlight on Ramen

**Prepared by Tamara Rasbury, JETRO Chicago**

On October 4th, the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago hosted a Premium Ramen Event at the Official Residence of the Consul-General. This special event was a pre-show to the Ramen and Izakaya Expo held at the Rosemont Convention Center, October 6-7.

Approximately 20 food and beverage professionals and media representatives attended this event. The attendees gathered at 11:30 a.m. to enjoy a Sake tasting and a sampling of Takoyaki from Takomasa, a famous Takoyaki restaurant in Osaka.

The opening remarks were made by Acting Consul-General of Japan in Chicago, Mr. Tanaka, who spoke about the increase in ramen restaurants and Japanese food in Chicago. Other speakers included, Mr. Koshikawa from Across River and the coordinator for the expo at the Rosemont Convention Center; Mr. Nakamura from Kinsei Ramen; Mr. Aoyagi from Aoyagi Tatami Shop; and Mr. Miyake from Yamasan Miyake (Mino pottery maker).

Mr. Koshikawa spoke about their goal in hosting an expo in Illinois and how different it will be from their past expos in Texas. Mr. Nakamura stressed the importance of using local ingredients. Mr. Aoyagi explained about the significance of creating new products using traditional Japanese products and creating something new; he had a table at the event where he displayed recycled tatami coasters. Mr. Miyake spoke about his Mino pottery and its importance to traditional Japanese cuisine. He also explained that he could provide each restaurant and the professionals with custom-made pottery products.

Following the presentations, the attendees enjoyed a bowl of ramen from Kinsei using Yamasan Miyake bowls. At the end of the event, attendees were gifted with the bowls and the tatami coasters.

In all, I believe this event was a wonderful way to introduce the Ramen Expo and Izakaya Expo which were held on October 6-7. It is important for JETRO Chicago and the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago to collaborate with one another to promote Japanese cuisine and culture.

### Ramen and Izakaya Expo October 6-7

JETRO exhibited at the first Ramen and Izakaya Expo hosted by the Ramen Expo Committee held October 6-7, at the Rosemont Convention Center. The expo consisted of 36 vendors from the food, beverage, ramen machinery and tools industries. The event was mainly for food and beverage professionals, but it was also opened to consumers who were interested in Japanese products. Although the initial concern was gathering enough attendees for the expo, 1,757 attended on the first day and 1,155 on the second day.



Out of the 36 exhibitors, approximately 16 vendors came from Japan, including Takomasa, Kinsei and Yamasan Miyake (Mino pottery maker) who participated in the October 4th event held at the official residence of the Consul-General of Japan in Chicago. JETRO Chicago also had a booth where we promoted

FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) 101, FSVP (Foreign Supplier Verification Program) and 101 Guide to Japanese Sake.

The Ramen and Izakaya Expo had many unique and new products attracting both professionals and consumers. The Ramen Expo Committee was pleased to see that the event was a success.

In all, we believe that the Ramen and Izakaya Expo were successful from the positive feedback we received from the organizer, as well as the increase in interest by Japanese food and beverage professionals and consumers. With the increase of Japanese restaurants and their popularity in Chicago, we believe there will be an increase in awareness and appreciation. With the success of the expo, the committee would like to host a similar event downtown Chicago, in the future. By offering our support and being part of this expo, we are able to support Japanese companies in the Midwest.



## Consul-General ... from page 1

In the 10 states under the jurisdiction of the Consulate, (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin), there are approximately 1,600 Japanese business facilities that provide around 160,000 jobs. Employment among these facilities has grown by over 30% over the last 5 years.

The Midwest has long been a destination for Japanese direct investment. Our shared tradition of work ethic and manufacturing has led many Japanese companies to build plants here. Of the total number employed by Japanese companies in the Midwest, nearly 90% come from manufacturing, owing largely to the investment of several Japanese auto makers in the Midwest.

Japan and the Midwest continue to enjoy a mutually beneficially bilateral trade partnership. Japan is the fourth largest market for exports out of the 10-state region, next to Canada, Mexico, and China, providing a strong and stable market for Midwest food and agriculture products,

as well as Midwest manufactured products such as pharmaceuticals, transportation equipment, and computer and electronic products. Japan's total imports from the 10-state area have grown by 10% in the last 5 years. This is very likely to accelerate under the new trade agreement.

As Consul-General, I am excited to partner with JETRO Chicago to build upon this rock solid foundation. We will work to advance our economic partnership on the grassroots level, with state and city leaders and officials. It is my desire to travel to communities all across the Midwest to meet with Japanese companies and the local communities they are a part of. I would like to invite you to participate as we convey the significance of the Japan – Midwest partnership and work to increase our two-way investment.

Over the last 60 years, JETRO Chicago has brought Japanese companies to communities large and small across this region. In this effort, they have been a great team member with the Consulate. I am eager to do even more during my time in Chicago as we work together as members of the same family.



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## The Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois and AlliancesSTL present the Japan Forum October 3 and 4



*Tsubasa Hashimoto introducing JETRO at the Japan Forum to the Board of Directors' Meeting of the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois (October 4 in Belleville, IL).*



*At the Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) Manufacturing Day which hosted over 1,600 area high school students and faculty. SWIC's Brad Sparks, Dean of Technical Education (center) led the tour. (October 4 in Granite City, IL).*



*Shimpei Ogiso, Senior Mgr., Sojitz Aerospace America Corporation; Dr. Ronda Sauget, Executive Director, Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois; Motohiro Hayami, Consul, Economic Section, Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago; City of Belleville Mayor Mark W. Eckert; Yasuhiro Uozumi, Executive Director, Keidanren USA; Jim Alexander, Senior Vice President, AlliancesSTL; Ralph Inforzato, Tsubasa Hashimoto, JETRO Chicago (October 4 in Belleville, IL).*



*Japan Forum presentations were made by members of the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago, Keidanren USA and JETRO Chicago to the Board of Directors' Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois and AlliancesSTL, on October 4 in Belleville, IL.*



*Above left, presentation by Motohiro Hayami, Consul, Economic Section, Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago.*

*Above right, Congressman Mike Bost's special welcome video to members of the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois, Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago, Keidanren USA and JETRO Chicago.*

## Guest View: Schilling ... from page 1

opportunities to extend a network of contacts with Japan's leading institutions, seek out collaborative programs and update my own recollection of Japan and its people.

Topics covered during meetings included the importance of the U.S.-Japan economic and security relationship, highlighted by Japanese presenters quoting our former Ambassador Mike Mansfield. It was gratifying to see how Mansfield's points still resonate in Japan.

At the time of my visit, a bilateral trade agreement between the U.S. and Japan had been announced just a week earlier. While there was relief that the trade issue had been addressed – and resolved – on a bilateral basis, it was encouraging to hear senior Japanese interlocutors quietly express their preference and support for solutions that would “have a more global impact.” Their views echoed the successful policy initiatives of the U.S. Trade Representative of the '80s, Clayton Yeutter, who spearheaded efforts to open Japanese markets by promoting the benefits of free and open trade, supported through multilateral institutions such as the GATT [which later became the World Trade Organization].

When I returned to the U.S. Embassy neighborhood, I quickly discovered that the modern buildings and landscape I had etched in my memory were gone, replaced by buildings that are even more modern and expansive. In fact, the oldest remaining structure in the U.S. Embassy district of Akasaka is the U.S. Embassy itself, which was a modern standout when built in 1976. Entirely new building plazas had sprung up around the embassy, including a new subway station that connects the entire neighborhood with gleaming underground pedestrian tunnels. Even the venerable Hotel Okura of my memory is gone, replaced by a towering 40-story edifice with surrounding gardens that had opened just two weeks before my arrival. My colleague from 30 years ago, Emi Ishimado of the Embassy Press Office, needled me about my amazement at all the changes that have taken place: “Andy-san – your memory of

Tokyo dates from MEIJI era!”

After two days in Tokyo, I joined a smaller contingent on the itinerary to Hiroshima for introductions to the local government, a tour of the Mazda production plant, and dinner with representatives of the local Hiroshima Chamber and JETRO. Our group also stopped at Miyajima – the “floating temple” that is a cultural icon of Japan. But for me, the personal highlight of the trip was an early morning visit to the Peace Park in the center of Hiroshima. A quiet and contemplative stroll among the monuments and gardens prompts deep reflection and serves as a powerful reminder and admonition that is still relevant today.

My return to Japan was wonderful opportunity to re-boot my vintage memories of Japan, reach out and expand the network of contacts with Japan's leading institutions, and establish new program plans for collaboration in the future. In fact, the Japan GEN-J trip has served as the impetus for a new initiative by the Omaha Chamber to seek out and invite new partnerships with Japanese businesses in the coming year.

I'm very grateful to the Japan Foundation, the Japanese Consulate in Chicago, and JETRO for their support and encouragement in establishing new grassroots networks.

*In this keepsake photo, Andrew Schilling is with Ambassador Mike Mansfield as they celebrated July 4 Independence Day in 1988, in Tokyo. Schilling is dressed as Uncle Sam and his wife Tracy is the Statue of Liberty.*



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## Chief Executive Director ... from page 1

It was confusing for me to listen to their foreboding claims as I read Ambassador Mansfield's strong statement on the U.S.-Japan relationship and with my own work at JETRO Chicago.

I saw that, in fact, a very different economic scenario was in action. During the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese companies were actually expanding and investing throughout the United States and particularly the Midwest. All the while, our states' leadership was consistently visiting Japan to build and sustain business and cultural relationships. The Midwest leadership embraced the steady expansion of Japanese investment. You see our Midwest leadership had embraced Ambassador Mansfield's guidance: "... the most important bilateral relationship – *BAR NONE!*"

In 2019, the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship is the singular focus by senior state and local leadership who travel to Japan and enthusiastically host Japanese business delegations and visits by Japan's prefecture governments. Why? Midwest leaders have seen that through the years Japanese companies in their regions keep expanding. They have internalized the positive role that Japanese companies keep in their states as superlative corporate citizens. On a social level, the keen interest of Japanese culture by Midwesterners has now become part of our mindset.

This summer and autumn local Midwest leaders, such as economic development professionals, local mayors and state representatives are participating in The Japan's Foundation Grassroots Exchange Network [GEN-J] program visits to Japan. I personally know some of these individuals, like Andy Schilling, and I feel compelled to capture as many of their voices on their Japan experiences to share in our newsletter.

Even today, the evidence of Midwest leadership in Japan is as robust as it has ever been. Just this September, a top delegation of our state leaders attended the 51st Annual Joint Meeting of the Midwest U.S. - Japan Association in Tokyo. The Joint Meeting's veteran Midwest delegation included Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb and Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, who were joined by first term Midwest leaders; Governor Mike DeWine (OH), Governor Tony Evers (WI), Governor Tim Walz (MN) and Illinois Deputy Governor Daniel Hynes.

Together, they made a unified voice to the Joint Meeting's 350 attendees on how strong the Midwest-Japan relationship has become and how special Japan is both economically and culturally within their states.



Speakers at the "The Ohio - Japan Investment Dynamic" seminar included Toshiyuki Sugimoto, President, THK Manufacturing of America, Inc. (left), Yasubiko Taniguchi, President & CEO, Hitachi Healthcare Americas (center), and Satoru Tanaka, Executive Officer, President, Consumer Products America and EMEA, Kao Corporation (right).

Our Midwest governors were there to make and sustain relationships in Japan and they did just that.

The Government of Japan's very senior leadership such as Taro Kono, who was at the time, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, responded with equal purpose focusing on the close Japan-U.S. relationship, the importance of the Japan-Midwest relationship and the strong value of the Joint Meeting. It was the quiet conviction of Foreign Minister Kono's words which most of all echoed Ambassador Mansfield's message, "the most important bilateral relationship – *BAR NONE!*"

During this time, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and his top team of J.P. Nauseef, President and Chief Investment Officer, JobsOhio and Lydia Mihalik, Director of the State of Ohio's Development Services Agency made a visit to JETRO Tokyo to meet our Chairman and CEO Nobuhiko Sasaki on September 10. JobsOhio and JETRO co-organized a State of Ohio investment briefing for Japanese companies led by Chairman Sasaki, Governor DeWine, JobsOhio's J.P. Nauseef and our JETRO Chicago leadership. Well over 100 Japanese company representatives attended enabling them to directly listen to Governor DeWine's warm personal message and explanation of the Ohio investment environment. Importantly, success case studies of Japanese companies having a business presence in Ohio were given by: Toshiyuki Sugimoto, President, THK Manufacturing of America, Inc., Satoru Tanaka, Executive Officer, President, Consumer Products America and EMEA, Kao Corporation and Yasuhiko Taniguchi, President & CEO, Hitachi Healthcare Americas.

Mayor Ben Stahler, City of Bellefontaine (OH) and City of Marysville, Mayor J.P. Rauch were part of Governor DeWine's large Ohio delegation of over 60 local leaders that visited Japan. They too offer keen insights about Japan for their communities in our newsletter. (Please see their interviews in this issue.)

The State of Iowa's Governor Kim Reynolds and Debi Durham, the state's senior director for economic development met for the first time with JETRO Chairman Sasaki and Executive Vice President Ichiro Soné on November 11. Governor Reynolds led an Iowa investment briefing for more than 60 Japanese companies who gathered at JETRO Tokyo.



Debi Durham, Director, Iowa Economic Development Authority, Nobuhiko Sasaki, Chairman of JETRO, Kim Reynolds, Governor, State of Iowa, Ichiro Soné, Executive Vice President, JETRO.

Midwest governors have substantive voices in Japan and Japanese company representatives want to meet them. Let's bring more of the Midwest state and local government leadership to JETRO Tokyo – Chairman Nobuhiko Sasaki and our Executive Vice President Ichiro Soné are pleased to meet and support them all.

On behalf of the entire JETRO Chicago team, we are very grateful to the many warm messages of congratulations we received as we commemorated JETRO Chicago's 60th anniversary during an evening reception on November 19. We were delighted to see or hear from each and every one of you. We'll work hard to meet your high expectations, we stand with you in sustaining the "... the most important bilateral relationship – *BAR NONE!*"