

Kosaka Newsletter

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Cover photo: Thanks to Kosaka's Flower Volunteers, a group dedicated to beautifying the town by planting flowers, Meiji Hyakunen Dori won the 2005 Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport "Most Beautiful Streetscape" prize (美しいまちなみ大賞), the first such distinction awarded a street in the Tohoku region.

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50th Anniversary Commemorative Ceremony and Symposium



This year, Kosaka municipal government turned 50. To commemorate this occasion, a ceremony was held at the Korakukan Theatre on October 30. About 350 people gathered for the festivities.

In his opening remarks Mayor Kawaguchi said “Even though the environment of our town is rapidly changing, adaptive measures are actively being implemented. The Sea of Japan Expressway, Sunakozawa Dam, support for local industries and the development of the tourism industry all point to a promising future... Despite the hard times, Kosaka chose the path of self-sufficiency.¹ I hope that all the townspeople will come together with a united vision for the future of our town.” The speaker for the town assembly followed up, “the policy of decentralization that is being implemented nationally is still problematic, but our goals are to create government that is efficiently responsive to the needs of the people. Localities taking responsibility for their own development and emphasizing their unique characteristics is what decentralization is all about. Therefore, the new Kosaka of the 21st century must be one built on the consensus of the local people. We hope to build a municipal government that

walks hand in hand with the people.”

After the opening speeches, 11 members of the community were awarded for their contributions to the development of Kosaka. Following that, the new town flower (acacia) and fish (himemasu trout) were announced by Mr. and Mrs. Isamu Wada, a couple married in 1955, the year Kosaka Town was formed, and their grandson Yota. Then, Dr. Uta Rensch, Mayor of Freiberg, Saxony, Germany, Curt Netto’s hometown, gave a presentation about Freiberg. As an intermission, Ito Motoharu and the Kenseikai performed a short chambara period play and raised the level of excitement in the audience.



After the play, the symposium “Eco-Town Fair in Odate and Kosaka: Towards a Civilization of Sustainable Resource Use” began. The symposium included speeches and panel discussions featuring many distinguished experts and served as a forum for exchanging ideas about the environment and sustainable development.



¹ In 2005, many towns merged to consolidate financial and administrative resources.

Mayor of Freiberg Visits Kosaka

Freiberg, a city in Germany founded in 1186, and has been a center of the mining industry in the Ore Mountains for centuries. A symbol of this history is the Freiberg



University of Mining and Technology, established in 1765 and the oldest university of mining and metallurgy in the world. Freiberg is also the hometown of Curt Netto, one of Kosaka's most important historical heroes.

Dr. Uta Rensch, the current mayor of Freiberg, happened to be in Japan for 2005/2006 *Deutschland in Japan* activities in October, so the town invited her to participate in the 50th Anniversary Ceremony and Symposium.

On October 28, Dr. Rensch, her husband, the deputy mayor of Freiberg, a professor from Freiberg University of Mining and Technology, as well as officials representing the state of Saxony paid a visit to the town office.

Then, on October 30 at the symposium, Dr. Rensch spoke about how Freiberg dealt with its mine closures and encouraged the development of new industries. Since the mines closed, Freiberg has been developing its semiconductor industry and alternative energy resources. With the cooperation of Freiberg University of Mining and Technology, Freiberg is in the process of transforming itself into a new high-tech industrial center.

Kosaka has also been working to transfer mining and metallurgy know-how to new industries such as metals recycling. We hope to sustain dialogue with Freiberg to trade ideas and help each other flourish in the future.



Curt Netto: A Kosaka Hero

Curt A. Netto (1847~1909) was born in the city of Freiberg, Saxony in eastern Germany. After graduating from the Freiberg University of Mining, he enlisted in the army for a short time before being hired by the Japanese government to help develop the Kosaka mine.

He came to Kosaka in 1873 and laid the foundations upon which Kosaka's future prosperity was built. Working with Japan's leading metallurgists, Netto was the first to successfully accomplish wet smelting of silver and copper in Japan. After leaving Kosaka in 1877, he became the first professor of mining and metallurgy at what is now Tokyo University and was an important mentor to the next generation of Japanese mining experts.



Netto's love of the Japan is obvious in the many watercolor paintings he drew. Netto's watercolor sketches of daily life in Meiji Era Kosaka are on display at the Kosaka Mine Office.

World Children's Drawing Exhibition

Last April, a request was sent out along with the Kosaka Newsletter to all former JICA participants enlisting their help in acquiring drawings made by elementary school children in their home countries. Thanks to everyone's enthusiastic support, we received 85 drawings representing 24 different countries. In addition, 17 drawings were submitted for the exhibition by the 3 municipal elementary schools.

Conceived as one of the events commemorating the 50th anniversary of the municipality, the purpose of this drawing exhibition was to strengthen the friendship between Kosaka and former JICA participants by continuing to involve them in the town's internationalization. Also, we hoped that this event would increase international awareness among the children of Kosaka and the children in JICA participants' home countries.

On October 22, the exhibition opened at the Kosaka Culture Festival held at Sepamu community center. Then, the collection toured each elementary school's school festival, Kosaka medical center and Kosaka Mine Office for a duration of 2 months.



The exhibition at Sepamu

The theme of the drawing exhibition was "My Dream." There were drawings of various media: pencil, crayon, paint, and collage. There were brilliantly colorful pieces as well as simple but refined sketches. Each drawing reflected a unique personality. The drawings were bursting with the children's ambitions for their own futures, their desires to help others and their hopes for world peace.

Kosaka Town would like to thank all the children who drew and sent us pictures, the JICA participants, as well as local teachers, relatives and other community members that made this exhibition possible.

Two drawings from the exhibition are shown below.



Kimia Babaie Dezaki (Iran) Age 9, Girl

I was born in an industrial mining town like Kosaka named Sarcheshmeh. All the time I am afraid of air pollution. I wish that this problem will be removed very soon in all the world.



Mariebel M. Santibanez (Philippines) Age 7, Girl

My family has a small farm (farmland and fish pond) and when I grow up I dream of being an agriculturalist so that I will take care of our little farm.

Thank You, Goodbye and Good Luck to Mr. Ito Motoharu



On December 11, Ito Motoharu (age 66) gave his last performance as leader of the Kenseikai at the Korakukan. It was his 10,353rd performance on the Korakukan stage, beating the Guinness Book of World Records' record for most stage performances 10,288 (held by Fujiyama Kanbi). The Korakukan is currently in the process of applying to Guinness World Records for recognition.

Ito has been performing at the Korakukan since it was renovated and reopened in 1986. For the last 20 years, from May to November each year, Ito performed 3 times a day almost everyday and never missed a performance. Braving typhoons and snow storms, enduring sickness and injury, Ito would perform whole-heartedly as long as there was even one person in the audience. With moving

emotion at the end of each and every performance he would kneel humbly to thank the audience: "Theatre does not belong to the actors, it belongs to the audience." Ito believed that without the support of the audience, actors would not have the privilege to perform. A true old-fashioned all-round entertainer, he devoted all his energy to making the audience happy and keeping his show fresh over the last 20 years. Acting, singing, dancing, playing Tsugaru jamisen (a northern cousin of the shamisen) and taiko drums, his repertoire is amazing. In addition, he was devoted to training the up-and-coming young actors he hand-picked each year for the Kenseikai and educating the audience about current societal problems through the scripting of his period plays.

Though Ito is retiring from the Korakukan stage and we regret to see him leave, we wish him the very best in his next endeavor.



Scene from the 1998 daily performance

Annual JICA Report

During the FY 2005 (April 2005 – March 2006), Kosaka hosted 3 JICA training programs.

First, from June 20 to July 8, 15 participants from 11 countries came for the “Area Focused Training Course on Mining Investment Promotion.” They had a chance to attend a tea ceremony and koto performance at Nakakoji no Yakata, an old samurai house. The women tried on kimonos. Other events held in the JICA participants’ honor included an iai demonstration at the Tenshikan and a barbecue party in the park.

Then, from August 22 to November 22, 20 participants from 19 countries stayed in Kosaka for the “Group Training Course on Sustainable Development of Mining.” As always, the participants of the 3 month training program were assigned host friends to show them around and bombarded by invitations to events from Kosaka International Society. Notably, with the cooperation of English teachers at Kosaka High School, participants enthusiastically participated in a new event, the “High School Student International Forum.” JICA participants presented their countries to students at Kosaka High School in simple English and then had a chance to talk to them intimately in small groups. The event was so successful that “High School Student International Forum II” was also held. Also, Okuni Jiman was restructured into 3 themed events: a cooking class, a song and dance night, and a sports festival. Each event enjoyed a good turnout from the community.

Finally, from January 30 to February 19, 6 participants visited Kosaka during the “Area Focused Training Course on Advanced Technology for Mining Exploration.” They attended French classes, a friendship exchange party as well as a tea and kimono party. Despite their short stay and lack of formal exchange events planned for them, they seem to have enjoyed the company of Kosaka’s citizens very much.

Unfortunately, due to JICA’s budget being cut nationally, Kosaka will only host the 3 month “Group Training Course on Sustainable Development of Mining” once a year starting in FY 2006.



Tea Ceremony at Nakakoji no Yakata



High School Student International Forum



Attending French class with local residents

**FY 2005 JICA participants came from
31 countries:**

Albania, Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Cuba, Fiji, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Mongolia, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Philippines, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.