

2012 BWA Exchange Program--Oahu

Arrival and Oahu United Visitation
By members of Oahu United BWA

Tuesday, July 31—Approximately 20 BWA members from Oahu and Honolulu were on hand to greet Mio Iwata of Fukuoka and Kana Yoshida as they stepped out of customs on a very busy day at Honolulu International Airport.



They were overwhelmed by the many fragrant leis and smiling faces that greeted them there. They were transported to Hawaii Betsuin where more BWA members as well as Bishop Eric



Matsumoto, Honorary President Tamayo Matsumoto, Federation Advisor Rev. Shindo Nishiyama and other ministers joined them for a brief service and welcome lunch prepared by the Pearl City BWA. Pieper Toyama and Joel Determan from PBA joined the group. Following lunch the girls went on a brief visit to PBA which had not started their school term yet.



They were settled in at the Hongwanji guesthouse on the headquarters premises to prepare for the Bishop's Dinner that night. Federation President Janet Honda, Honorary BWA president Tamayo Matsumoto and some of the guests welcomed the girls with Hawaiian delicacies and helped them prepare for their week in Hawaii.

Wednesday, August 1—June and Bob Asato of Oahu United picked them up early in the morning and took them to meet their tour hosts, Raimi Ishikawa Reisen (2005 BWA exchange student from Mililani) and Rene Mansho (Mililani BWA member), at Pearl Country Club where the group enjoyed breakfast overlooking Pearl Harbor and the Arizona Memorial from a distance.



It was a somber moment as we briefly discussed our hopes and aspirations for peace—reflecting on the tragedies of Pearl Harbor as well as of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After breakfast, Raimi and Rene took Mio and Kana to the Aloha Stadium Swap Meet. The girls were amazed by the extensive booths and variety of goods. They were able to buy lots of fun and inexpensive omiyage. Mio even had to purchase a new suitcase at the swap meet to carry all the goodies she bought. They really enjoyed shopping at the swap meet and wanted to spend all day there.

The group then drove to the North Shore, and Mio and Kana were surprised by the sudden change of scenery to agricultural lands. They tried the famous Ahi Shoyu Poke from Kahuku Superette, and enjoyed fresh, tasty garlic shrimp at Famous Kahuku Shrimp Truck. On the drive to Haleiwa, the girls got to see a clam Sunset Beach, turtles at Laniakea Beach and rock jumpers at Waimea Bay. They were dazzled by the clean, clear, blue seas and couldn't wait to get their feet wet. After a refreshing shave ice snack at Matsumoto's in Haleiwa, the group headed to Dole Pineapple Plantation. Mio and Kana were excited to see how pineapples grow from the ground and were intrigued by the shapes, sizes and colors of the numerous varieties. They spent some time walking through the huge gift shop and bought more omiyage for their friends and home temples.

After a quick change into the Aloha wear they bought at the swap meet, they met members and ministers from the six Oahu units for a potluck dinner at Waipahu Hongwanji. Former BWA exchange students Kathy Taira Nakamoto and Cari Taira Lee organized a program to include ukulele lessons, group singing and special Hawaiian snack of Hurricane popcorn. The girls got to deliver their greetings and were very gracious in mingling with the many well-wishers there. They got very emotional as they expressed their original apprehension about visiting Hawaii for the first time. They were grateful to have found that their apprehensions were groundless as they received gracious hospitality wherever they went. Raimi took the girls back to Honolulu to pack for their flight to Hilo.



Thursday, August 2—June and Bob Asato picked them up early in the morning after they were hosted by breakfast by Tamayo Matsumoto. They were packed and ready so we decided to take them for a brief drive through downtown and Ala Moana. They were surprised to see so many swimmers and surfers out enjoying the ocean before going to work and oohed and ahed over their first real close, picture postcard view of Diamond Head from Ala Moana so we stopped for a photo stop. They even took a photo with a tanned, athletic young surfer who happened to be sitting on the wall. As we chatted, we discovered that this young man was getting ready to go to Guam for business and was to stop over in Tokyo for two days before coming home. It was a nice encounter for all—no names, just a really cool picture on each girl’s cell phone.

They got to the airport early and the time was good as there were no lines at TSA. We then went back to do the “maid service” for the guesthouse.



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