

Miss Kyoto, Miss Anne meet in Japan

Friendship dolls' help Dukakis celebrate 25 years of sister cities

By Laurence Collins
Globe Staff

KYOTO, Japan — In 1943, as the Pacific war was turning against the Japanese empire, thousands of American dolls that had been sent here as a gesture of friendship from American children in 1926 were taken into schoolyards by Japanese children to be mutilated, burned and destroyed.

Yesterday, Michiko Ikuta, who is a sixth-grade schoolgirl had played a part in a Japanese-American doll exchange, wept as one of the few American dolls to survive that period met its Japanese counterpart in this ancient city and former capital of Japan.

The Japanese doll, called Miss Kyoto, had been kept in the Boston Children's Museum since 1928.

In 1928, about 2.6 million Japanese children had each contributed half a penny to pay for the hand-crafting of 58 dolls and sending them to the United States to reciprocate the earlier gesture to American children.

In 1927, Ikuta had written American schoolchildren, describing a farewell party she and her classmates held for the doll they called Miss Kyoto.

"We sang and danced for her because she will not come back to us again," Ikuta wrote. "Please take care of her forever. We will pray to God that we will be friends forever."

Fourteen years later, after the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, America and Japan were at war.

Better preserved

But a copy of Ikuta's poignant letter has been preserved and was exhibited yesterday at Kyoto's city hall, where Gov. Michael S. Dukakis and his wife, Kitty, took part in the "friendship doll" ceremony, one of several such events organized to mark the 25th anniversary of the day Boston and Kyoto became sister cities.

The Miss Kyoto doll was returned to Kyoto this month to be repaired before it is returned to the Boston Children's Museum. An American doll, known as Miss Anne, was displayed with her.

About 12,000 such dolls were sent to Japan, and Miss Anne is one of 33 of them that are known to have survived.

Dukakis hailed the 25-year-old link between Kyoto and Boston and mentioned that he and his wife would often visit the Children's Museum, where he had occasion to see Miss Kyoto as well as the model of a Japanese house that the Kyoto city government had given to the museum.

"The house is a very unique corner of tranquility in our busy city and we are very grateful to you," said Dukakis.

Representing the city of Boston at the ceremony was Robert Kenny, former executive director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), who joined the governor in presenting gifts to Kyoto city officials.

Interest is widespread

Among them was Mayor Masahiko Imagawa, who in a brief speech — through an interpreter — recalled the time when he was a boy and the American dolls arrived in Japan. "When the newspapers published stories this month describing how Miss Kyoto was returning to Japan, it caused a sensation," the mayor said.

Judging from the fact that more than 30 local television and newspaper reporters attended yesterday's event, interest in the arrival of the Children's Museum doll seems to be widespread in the Kyoto area.

Leslie Bedford, the Children's Museum's East Asian Program director, presented a history of the so-called friendship dolls accompanied by the playing of a recording of a children's chorus singing a song written about the doll exchange in the 1920s.

The governor and his delegation, which includes Harvard professor and Asian specialist Ezra Vogel and Byron Battle, director of the state office of international trade, are in Japan on the second leg of a two-week trip to promote trade and investment in China and Japan by Massachusetts firms.

Last week the governor accompanied 11 Massachusetts business people to Guangzhou (Can-



Gov. Michael Dukakis and his wife, Kitty, with Masahiko Imagawa, the mayor of Kyoto, Japan, and American and Japanese dolls.

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ton), China, where six of the executives and Guangdong province officials signed letters of intent on deals that have the potential for millions of dollars in business for the Massachusetts firms.

Courtesy calls

Yesterday, the governor's first full day in Japan after arriving from China late Friday night, was spent chiefly in making courtesy calls on the mayor of Kyoto and the governor of the Kyoto prefecture, Yukio Hayashida.

Over tea, the governor and his counterpart in Kyoto discussed the many problems they had in common, particularly one of Dukakis' favorite themes, mass transportation. Gov. Hayashida noted that like Boston, his city has serious traffic problems and is now building a new highway to alleviate them.

"Do you have the land to that?" Dukakis asked.

"We here envy the space that you have in your country," Hayashida replied.

"Well, we envy your rail and mass-transit system. If we had such systems, we would be a better off," said Dukakis.

Later that afternoon, Kitty Dukakis visited a school where she gave the pupils a brief dancing lesson. Today Dukakis is scheduled to visit a manufacturing plant that has a contract to build trolleys for the Massachusetts Transit Authority (MBTA).

Tomorrow the governor and his wife will take a train to Tokyo, where he will preside over the opening of a New England business exhibit at a Japan-sponsored "Made in America" trade fair.