



American-Japanese Student Summer Exchange

From 1974-1987, one of the highlights of the Rotary year was the visit of students to our club and to our homes. Rotary Clubs from Los Angeles, California contemplated a stop for their students on the way to Japan and asked the Rotary Club of Richmond, as the closest club to the airport, if we were interested. We were enthusiastic and so began a wonderful summer ritual.

Late June, a group of 20 or so American students came to Richmond and were hosted by members of our club. Their visits of 3 or 4 days included sightseeing, shopping, pool parties and dinner at the Spaghetti Factory before they left for Japan.

At the end of August, the Japanese students flew to California with their new found American friends and then to Richmond for a 3 day visit before returning to Japan. What a rewarding experience this was for our club.

We learned “ohayoogozaimasu”, “dooitashimashite” and “sayonara” and they practised their English. When communication was challenging, there were smiles, hand gestures and music. Each year one or two children of Richmond Rotarians joined the group; they have memories to last a lifetime.

One of the many beautiful memories was the moment on the way to the airport to say farewell to our Japanese students when the daughter of a club member said “Just think--three days ago we were strangers and now we are friends”.

Is this not Rotary in action?



The Yurkovich ladies with their Japanese guests



Entertaining Japanese students



Entertaining American students



Ray Inouye with students en route to Japan - 1981



Saying “Sayonara” at the airport

