

## OPEN LETTER

### Participation in Sister-City Program

DEAR EDITOR:

"Why aren't more Japanese-Americans active in the Sister City programs?"

Because I had already asked myself that question many times, I had no answer when it was posed as I was driving to San Francisco with Mrs. Tess Koch, auditor, and Mrs. Fern Harger, president, of the Berkeley - Sakai Sister City Association. We were on our way to hear an address by William Hosokawa, who is Associate Editor of the Denver Post and has achieved prominence with his book, "Nisei, the Quiet Americans."

Mrs. Koch, very well-known Bay Area book reviewer, was particularly eager to meet Mr. Hosokawa for she has presented her moving review of his book to audiences which total over a thousand people. The high esteem in which Mrs. Koch holds Mr. Hosokawa's book can be judged by the fact that she chose it to review at a special benefit arranged by the University Women to found a scholarship in the name of Carrie Tessin Willig — Mrs. Koch's mother. Recalling stories of discrimination suffered by her German immigrant grandparents, she felt that this book was a fitting memorial to her mother. She continues to review the book whenever possible and hopes in this way to help correct false notions and impressions held by many regarding the Japanese - Americans.

Mrs. Harger, whose deep interest in Japan and its culture began through high school friendships with Japanese - Americans in Danville, California, has been extremely active in the Student exchange program between Berkeley and Sakai since it began in 1968. This month long Summer friendship program follows an alternate pattern — one year Sakai students come to Berkeley, and the following year Berkeley students visit in Sakai. Students visiting the Sister City enjoy a planned daily program as well as the people-to-people relationship opportunities afforded by living with two host families. Mrs. Harger has guided arrangements for Sakai students during two of their Berkeley visits and for the second time, will lead Berkeley students to Sakai this summer.

In her role as leader, she prepares younger people for their visit to Japan. A talk on the subject of study for the meeting is presented, and printed copies are given out to make up a reference book for each student. The studies include history, geography, arts, language, religion, drama, agriculture, industry, etc. The talk is followed by a film obtained from the Japanese Consulate General relating to the subject discussed.

Field trips are arranged to increase the students' knowledge of Japanese culture. Ushering tickets for the recent San Francisco appearance of Bunraku were obtained, and the students were thoroughly prepared for their exciting experience by students.

TURN TO PAGE 2

## LETTER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

dying the origins of Japanese drama and seeing an informative film on Bunraku puppet making and the training of the performers. They plan to attend the Ikebana and Japanese Arts show sponsored by the San Francisco-Bay Area Chapter of Ikebana International. April will find them at the Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco's Nihon-machi.

This careful preparation of the students closely parallels her preparation of the 1971 students. The story of that program received a citation in the Awards Contest sponsored by the Readers' Digest Foundation and the Town Affiliation Association (National Sister City organization).

This Student Exchange program is open to all interested students whose parents live or work in Berkeley. There are fifteen students in the group this year, only one of which is a Sansei. With the desire on the part of the Nisei to have their children know and see Japan — and with the stress the young are putting on their ethnic backgrounds — why aren't there more Sansei participating?

The Student Exchange is not the only value of the Sister City relationship for the Japanese - Americans. An article in the Pacific Citizen (2/2/73) headlined, "Sister City Program Significant Aid in Improving Japan's Image in World," quotes Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Yasushi Murazumi as saying, "We think the rewards have been significant to both Japan and the countries with which we have Sister City relationships — in mutual understanding, trade, cultural exchanges and the important people-to-people friendships that have been established.

Unfair though it is, it still stands that white America's attitude toward citizens of Japanese extraction seems to blow hot and cold with changes in relations between Japan and the U.S. When there are organizations such as Sister City associations which are actively working to bring about a better understanding, not only of Japan, but also of the Japanese - American, why isn't the opportunity to get to know and work with people who share our goals eagerly seized?

Why aren't more Japanese - Americans active in the Sister City programs?

BARBARA T. TAKAHASHI  
No. 1, Vicente Rd.  
Berkeley, Ca. 94705