

"FLIGHT OF FRIENDSHIP BRINGS SMILES"

By: Tom Sugita

Relief volunteers arrive in Tokyo, Japan on May 30 to help Tohoku Region Tsunami victims and survivors. Called the "Flight of Friendship Goodwill Mission", 89-dedicated and passionate volunteers from all corners of the United States, and from within Japan assemble to assist in relief supply and clean-up. This is the first time since the March 11, 2011 major earthquake and tsunami that a group as large as this has entered Japan to be ambassadors of goodwill and work alongside the Japan people in volunteer efforts.

According to Tei Gordon, President of "From Oregon with Love, Inc.", this program and trip was planned by Sho Dozono, President of Azumano Travel of Portland, Oregon and his dedicated committee and is amazing that he was able to put together such a quality delegation representing a diverse group in such a short time. People who know Sho, this is nothing surprising as he has done goodwill missions to New York after 9/11, Katrina and Thailand to name a few of his humanitarian projects.

When people from Maryland, Washington, D.C., Florida, California, Washington, Hawaii, Shanghai, Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe and majority from Oregon assembled in Tokyo, no one anticipated what we would be facing in terms of the devastated regions and the type of volunteer efforts we would be doing in the coming days. Each paid their own expenses.

Entering Japan and going to the most damaged prefectures to assist in relief work was coordinated by Peace Winds of Japan and Amy Kohnstamm, Senior Community Relations Officer of Mercy Corps, Oregon. Peace Winds is a Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to the support of people in distress with headquarters in Japan. Established in 1996 this organization conducts rapid and emergency humanitarian activities and does all the legal clearance working with the people and areas needing the most assistance. Funded by UN and Foundation grants plus membership and general donations, they are able to get the needed supplies as quickly as possible. Since the areas of our volunteering were in restricted areas, the Peace Winds coordinators had total control of our activities such as number of volunteers at each site, working with other volunteers



Ameriah Fattom and Mazouz Fattom (Father) (1st row-6th from Left) with Japan volunteers at new portable shelters



Ishinomaki disaster scene



Volunteers hauling debris to pick up location

from within Japan, and strict rules to follow in respecting the victims, survivors and environment. Peace Winds coordinators were very respectful and professional in how they dealt with the volunteers. The schedule for a group of this size was monumental. The coordination by, Nancy Parrott and Kristen Dozono were remarkable

in their approach to scheduling and assignment changes that happened on last minute notices. The cooperation by everyone was great and it was total team effort.

BRIEFING: The first full day in Tokyo was filled with many activities beginning with a U.S. Embassy welcoming and briefing

by Ambassador John Roos, Military attaché, Commander Freeman and others. Briefing lasted some 1-1/2 hours with Q&A after each speaker. The extensive briefing gave a complete and current status of the situation to where Japan is on relief and recovery efforts for the Tohoku region and Miyagi Prefecture that were completely destroyed by the tsunami that inundated the coastal towns. It was mentioned that recovery could be anywhere from 3 to 5 years with an estimated cost of over \$309 Billion. Because all of these damaged prefectures are considered restricted with Self Defense Forces of Japan and contractors working under difficult conditions of mud/muck, dust and ocean water that is still prevalent all over the worksites, safety was of utmost concern for everyone.

OPERATION TOMODACHI: One of the greatest assistance rendered during this crisis was the aide of the U.S. Military working in partnership with the Japan Self Defense Forces to help in the restoration of the Sendai Airport. This was accomplished in just 10-days to become operational and helped to fly in needed relief supplies.

After the briefing, we were motor coached to FUJI TV Headquarters one of Japan's private TV stations and greeted by Chairman Hisashi Hieda and the station hosted a wonderful special bento luncheon. The greeting and appreciation of the Japan people at all stops was one of gratitude for this group. This was also the first time that Mr. Hieda and FUJI TV hosted such a large contingent and it was due to the many years of friendship between Sho & Loen Dozono and Mr. Hieda that this was possible.

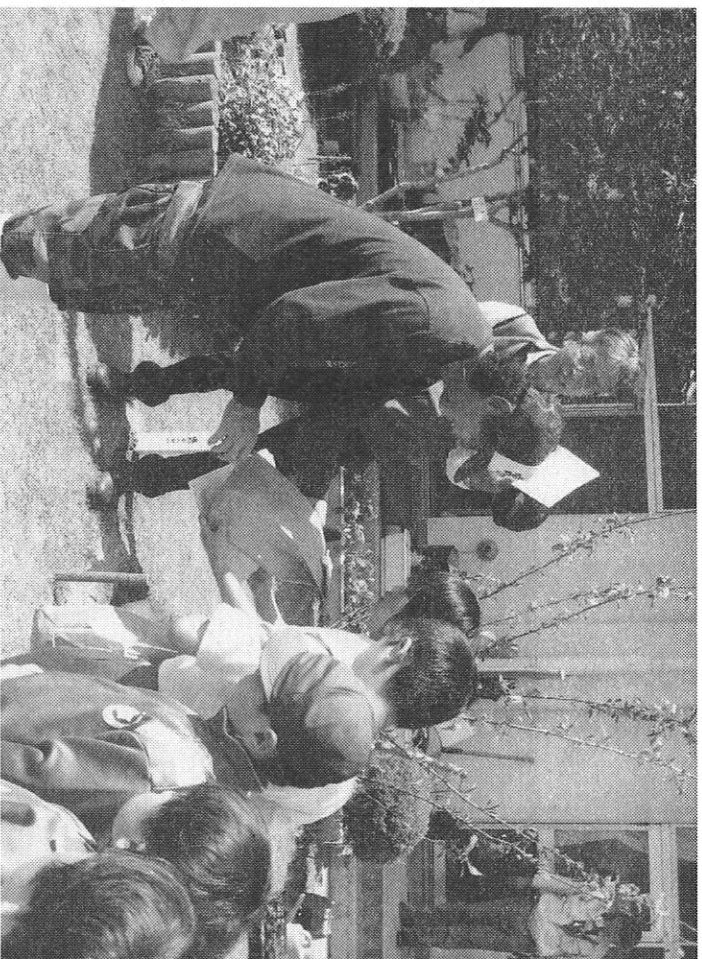
After the luncheon, the delegation had the opportunity to visit and shop at Asakusa Kannon and Nakamise shopping arcade as half of this contingent was first time visitor to Japan. The evening was a special buffet dinner at the 42nd floor restaurant of Oregon Bar & Grill. One of the highlights was the surprise visit by Honorable Senator Dan Inouye. Senator Inouye thanked the group for their dedication to come to Japan and to volunteer.

HOTELS: Our stay in Tokyo was at the Grand Prince New Takanawa Hotel and next day, our
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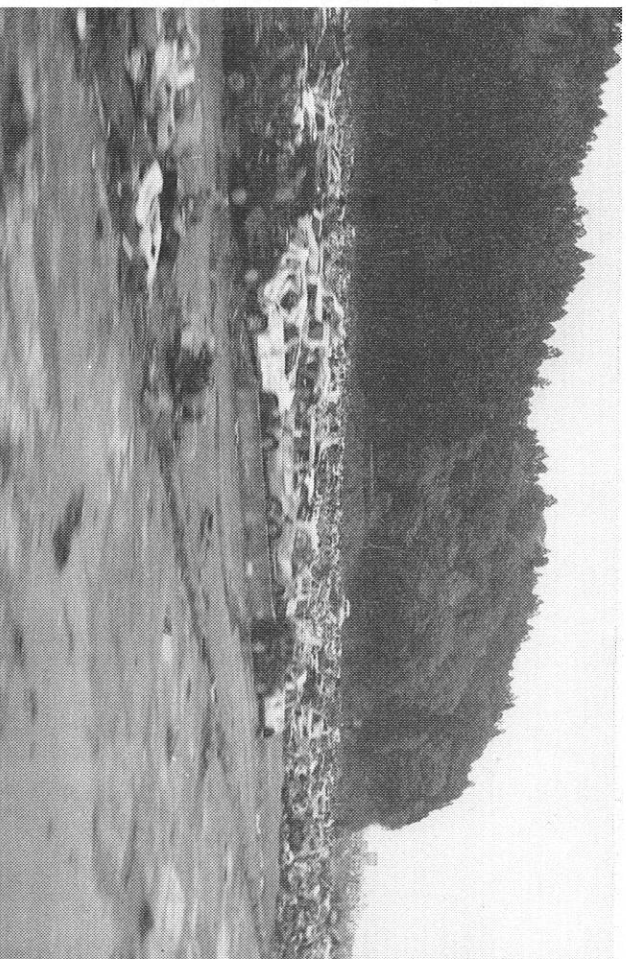
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 real journey began by traveling to Sendai to arrive at our headquarter hotel, JAL City Sendai Hotel, a 5-hour bus ride from Tokyo. Upon arrival at Sendai, a city with about one million people, our first stop was at the Sendai TV station for another overview and briefing by the Station Manager and we got to see the initial pictures of the tsunami and damages it caused to the many coastal towns, especially Kesennuma and Ishinomaki.

Next was a stop at the Sendai Betsuin for the group to offer prayers for the victims and survivors conducted by four ministers. Arriving at our hotel early evening, we all eagerly anticipated how our next few days would be like. The next morning, the buses departed for the different relief sites beginning at 8:00 A.M. for Ishinomaki, Kesennuma or Sendai. If anyone anticipated just routine type of cleaning and relief assistance was further from the truth as each group faced very challenging, hazardous and adverse working conditions. We returned after 9:00 P.M., exhausted, dirty and smelly but still smiling.

ISHINOMAKI: Volunteers who had to clean the stream areas adjacent to the elementary school had to be sure that they had rubber boots or heavy work shoes, rubber or heavy duty gloves, and other safety gears as the debris to be cleaned consisted of broken boards with lots of nails protruding, sheets of glass, corrugated roofing, roof tiles, 55-gal drums with oil still inside, huge buoys, every size and shape of branches, logs, fish nets, clothing and every conceivable item that is in a house that the tsunami pushed inland and up these rivers or streams. Even a soaked tatami mat



Tom Sugita handing gift from America to elementary school children



1,000 disaster-hit cars in a temporary storage field in Ofunato

, roughly 35" x 70" required 6-guys to lift and carry down the muddy embankment of the stream, through the stream and up the embankment then a wheelbarrow was used to haul it another 200 ft to the side of the road for pick-up. Slippery, muddy, and so much debris that it was hazardous and back breaking work, but we all worked alongside

the Japan volunteers and did a yeoman job. Personal items such as albums, toys, photo frames and others were set aside in a special area. Complete respect was shown for these items.

KESENNUMA: At this relief site, 20- volunteers assisted a family in cleaning and clearing the

interior of a home. As Chris Dybing mentioned, although the structure was relatively intact, the interior was a complete mess with weeks of dense black and caustic sludge that smelled of dead and rotting fish, petroleum and sewage, and they had to endure this smell which he claimed was incomprehensible. The refrigerator was on the kitchen counter, the washing machine was in the bathtub and lots of rotting fish, several large tuna, probably from a nearby processing plant. A wrecked car blocked the living room window. However, all was not lost as they were able to salvage personal items such as photo albums, diplomas and other memorabilia. The family was so moved and thankful for complete strangers who came from so far away to help and they provided food and beverage throughout the day. One of their sons, Taku said that the family fell into depression soon after the tsunami that did so much damage to their home they purchased a few years ago. However, in light of this, seeing the volunteers do so much gave them hope. Despite the pungent odor and difficult conditions, no one ever complained before, during and after. There are hundreds of homes that need the same assistance throughout this and other devastated prefectures.

At another location, a third group of volunteers assisted in unloading and placing needed supplies to newly built portable shelters. The 84-units were constructed within two weeks and would house some 341 survivors. Each unit would have anywhere from one to seven occupants and we first unloaded the supplies at each row of these portable units. Futons, blankets, table, plates, utensils and other basic items had to be put into

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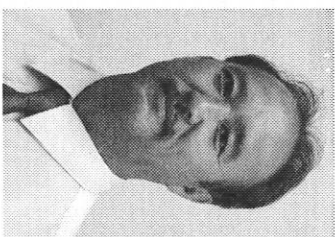
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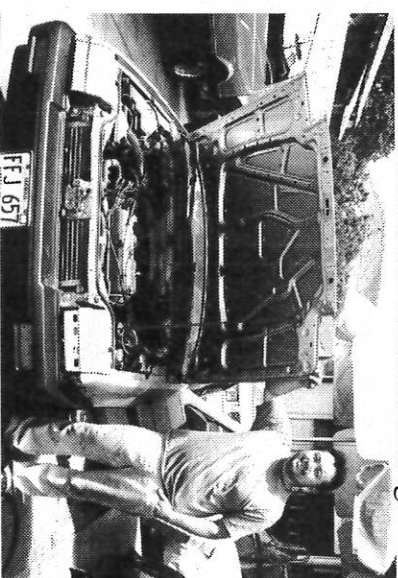
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(Continued from Previous Page) each unit according to number of persons assigned to each unit. These well constructed portables came with all the appliances; range, washer/dryer, refrigerator, TV and air conditioning unit.

At this particular site, the units were built on a playground and consisted of seven rows of six units each on two sides with a clubhouse for gatherings and meetings. Because only 3,000 have been constructed to date, another 7,000 are scheduled to be built and many more volunteers are needed. Hopefully other organizations and groups of volunteers will continue to return to these areas and lend a helping hand.

OUR YOUNGSTERS: This group had ten High School students from several different schools. Seven were from Oregon Islamic Academy. Amirah Fattom was their group spokes person and they made us very proud in the way they held up to the task under difficult conditions and she and her classmates, five girls and two boys were very committed. When I asked her why she made this trip, her answer was: "I wanted to make a difference and touch the heart of at least one person. I want to be part of a good change."

Another youngster from California, Brandon Matsumoto, worked like there was no tomorrow with two others from Tokyo, Chris Dybing and Takeshi Yanaike hauling out large logs and branches from slippery and hilly sections of the pristine forest areas around the stream adjacent to the elementary school.

Chris and Takeshi were given couple of days off from their Tokyo company to help out and it took them the 5-hour drive from Tokyo to Sendai. From Sendai it is another 2-3 hours to reach the various relief sites. After the second



13 school children with relief volunteers with gifts from America



Damage at Ishinomaki

day, finishing around 6 P.M. they drove back to Tokyo, arriving around midnight to resume their normal job.

It was refreshing looking at how our youngsters performed under difficult and challenging conditions, smiling and knowing that they are making a difference, tells us a lot about the best of America. From the youngest at 13 to the oldest at 70 plus, this group came together because they "Wanted to Make a

Difference" and not because "They had to." This was obvious. In life, many times we don't get a second chance and there is no question that all that joined this humanitarian mission did not procrastinate or hesitate in their decisions.

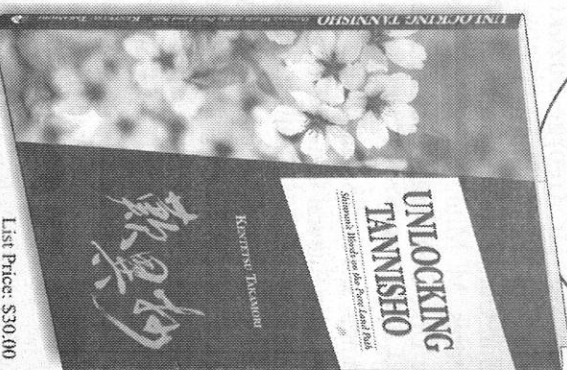
One fellow who caught my attention and I got to know him well during our time at dinner or at the worksite is Shinzo Tamura who hails from Kobe and joined us because of his friendship with

one of our three volunteers from Hawaii. He had already made six trips to various parts of Sendai and other prefectures. He has been volunteering his time to help with whatever is needed. The trip from Kobe is 800 miles and takes him 10-hours and I joked with him as to how many "pit stops" he has to make and he says, "Many". In 1995, Kobe was struck with the devastating Hanshin earthquake that killed thousands of their people, others from Japan and elsewhere offered help so this was Shinzo's way of giving back by going the extra mile with his relief efforts.

Our journey into the unexpected was driving through the heart of what once was a town. Driving on roads that were cleared for equipment to pass and yet so many of the areas are still intact with the rubble of broken and tilted houses, boats strewn all over the place, cars piled on top of another, debris as far as the eyes can see, workers and dump trucks along with the SDF and their equipments in operation was mind boggling as to the enormity of the damage. News footage does not do justice unless one is at ground zero. Driving mile after mile through the devastation we wondered where it would end. It is a very humbling experience and one never to be forgotten. It was mentioned that at some places the tsunami pushed debris six miles inland. The aftermath scene is so massive.

YOKOSO: after 9/11, Japan launched a major program called Yokoso Japan asking visitors to please come to Japan, as travelers were reluctant to fly anywhere. Now Japan is again asking the world, "Please come to Japan, we are open for business and it is safe." We were never in harms way and people are beginning to again travel **(Continued on Next Page)**

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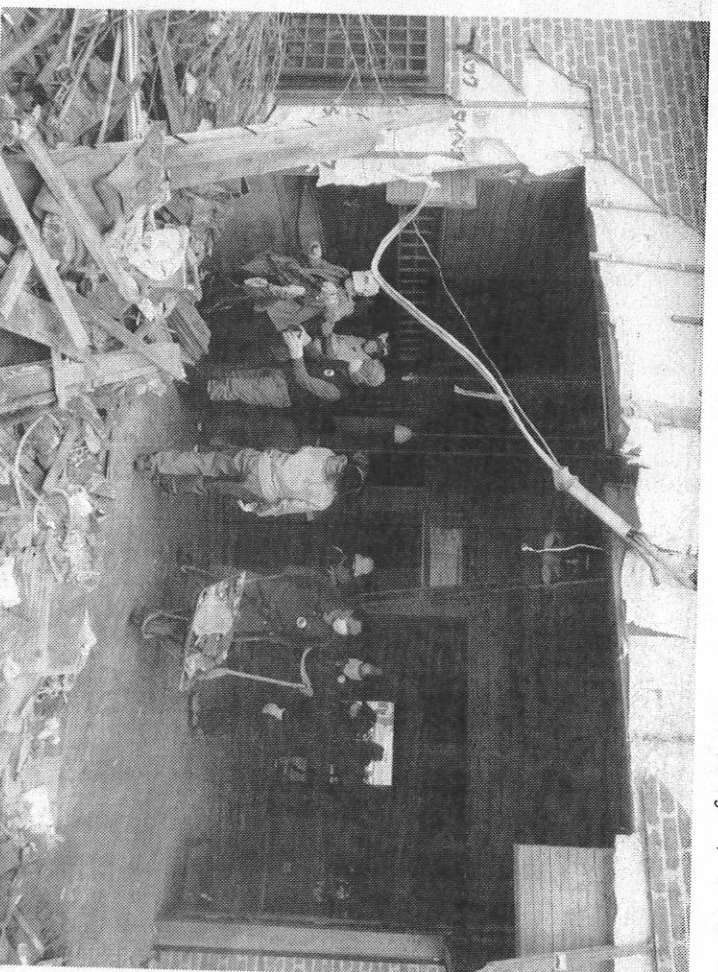
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Chris Dybing and Takeshi Yanaike (Tokyo) ready to help family clean mud and debris at private home



Helping family clean house at Kesennuma

(Continued from Previous Page) and enjoy themselves and getting back to normalcy.

Our tour guide Sumiyo Terai said it best. She said that a few days after the earthquake and tsunami there were hundreds of tour cancellations and she was put on indefinite leave. As our tour guide, this was her first work in several months, and she was so thankful for this contingent from the USA. The same could be said from other Japan people who found out who we were and where we came from, as they all expressed their sincere appreciation. The hotels we stayed at were so happy to have visitors from abroad.

The volunteers were also given the opportunity to tour Matsushima, one of the three most beautiful and visited places in all Japan when they were not doing any relief work for that particular day.

HIGHLIGHT: On the last day

Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i to Honor Dr. Genshitsu Sen

The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (JCCH) will honor a Japanese national treasure and cultural icon, Dr. Genshitsu Sen, 15th Generation Grand Tea Master from Japan's Urasenke Tea School during its annual Celebration of Leadership and Achievement Dinner (CLAD) on Saturday, July 23 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa's Tapa Ballroom.

Dr. Sen's lifelong goal and mission is personified through a simple yet very profound motto: Peacefulness Through a Bowl of Tea. For 60 years, Urasenke has taught Chado (The Way of Tea) in Hawai'i. The comprehensive practice of the tea ceremony is centered on the deepest aspects of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility, and it is Dr. Sen's hope that these virtues, understood and felt through the sharing of tea, will reach around the world and contribute to the attainment of world peace.

During World War II, Dr. Genshitsu Sen was in the Imperial Navy. Upon his return home, he was surprised to find his father serving tea to U.S. military officers in their home. At the time, he didn't understand what was happening but watched and what he saw touched

of relief clean up duties at the Ishinomaki Elementary school, the Principal allowed the 13-remaining students to meet with us and we

were able to present each youngster with a gift package consisting of Hawaiian Host mac nut, a stuffed animal toy dog, letters from Palisades Elementary school students, small hand towel and other goodies and concluded with "high fives" and picture taking. This was very special as we were not allowed to visit survivor shelters and picture taking was very restricted.

Majority of the school children from this school were relocated to other schools due to the fact that their parents lost their homes and now lived in relocation housing or shelters further away. Thousands lost their livelihood, homes, belongings and their loved ones. We hope that these youngsters for at least one day can forget the pain and suffering to enjoy the gift

him very deeply. They were laughing, enjoying each other's company. They were at peace over a bowl of tea.

"Dr. Sen's message and lifelong mission to promote world peace resonates throughout our Hawaiian community," said Lenny Yajima Andrew, president & executive director of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i. "We are honored to be able to recognize a national treasure whose cultural influence will continue to enrich the community and the Cultural Center for years to come."

Dr. Sen was born in Kyoto as the first son of the 14th Urasenke Grand Tea Master iemoto, Mugensai. Sen served as the 15th Urasenke Grand Tea Master for 38 years up to the end of 2002, when he transferred the iemoto position and the hereditary name Soshitsu to his eldest son. Dr. Sen is the Japan-UN Goodwill Ambassador and President of the United Nations Association of Japan.

At this special dinner, the Cultural Center will also bestow an honorary title to Dr. Sen. The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i will also celebrate another milestone as the annual event will mark its 15th anniversary. For

of "Aloha" from America. Before our departure, seeing the smiles on the children faces made our day.

EMOTIONS: Did it touch everyone? No question as during our farewell dinner, those that spoke expressed their personal feelings and on the long 6-1/2 hour bus ride from Sendai to Narita Airport, the members were given opportunity to also express their experiences and thoughts. And yes, it was not easy as we all were touched by what we saw, what we did, and our aloha for all the survivors and victims! It will have a lasting impression for us.

Hawaii was represented by Brenda Nomura, educator at Leilehua High School and Tiffanie Masutani, former cherry blossom princess. Both women brought over large quantities of food items for the Fukushima survivor shelter. We thank Delta and JAL for allowing us to bring over many extra boxes of

the past 15 years, the Celebration of Leadership and Achievement Dinner has honored Hawai'i's most influential leaders in the community. Past honorees have been invited back to commemorate the special milestone.

The Cultural Center's Celebration of Leadership and Achievement Dinner takes place Saturday, July 23 at 5:00 p.m. at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa Tapa Ballroom. Table sponsorships are available (\$10,000/\$5,000/\$2,500). Individual seats are \$250; \$175 (\$200 after June 30) for Urasenke members; and \$150 (\$175 after June 30) for JCCH members. For more information, visit www.jcch.com or call (808) 945-7633 Ext. 46.

Proceeds from this event will benefit the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i and all of its programs and services including, educational programs, workshops, cultural presentations, and festivals.

Past CLAD honorees include Yoshiharu Satoh, Richard T Mamiya, M.D., Masayuki Tokioka, Former Governor George R. Ariyoshi, Albert C. Kobayashi, Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Dr. Ruth M. Ono, Dr. Fujio Matsuda, Dr. Albert Miyasato, Joanne Ninomiya, Ryozo Sakai, Dr. Noboru Akagi Sensei, Albert

donations by waiving the baggage fee. Norman Kukino, VP Hawaii Sales for Hawaiian Host donating mac nut candies and Suzanne Yamada, Principal of Palisades Elementary School for having her students write letters of "Aloha and Well Wishes."

We are thankful to Reverend Hasegawa and Reverend Nakamura of the Sendai City Diocese of Tokyo for helping us in the distribution of the candies, letters and stuffed animals to the remote areas that are located away from the major shelters. They said that they were in dire need for candies and the timing could not have been better.

This was a journey of Heart to Heart relationship and Breaking Bread and Sweat and the end result is "A GOOD FEELING."

Aoki Sensei, Tsuruo Fukushima Sensei, Bobby Lowe Sensei, James Miyaji Sensei, Takashi Nonaka Sensei, Shimichi Suzuki Sensei, Shigeo Yoshinaga Sensei, Shirokiya, Masao Koike, Les Murakami, Wally Yonamine, Occidental Life Insurance, Jane Komeiji, Dr. Dick Kosaki, Dr. Margaret Oda, Dr. Dennis Ogawa, Island Insurance Companies, Jean Ariyoshi, Dr. George Suzuki, Matsuo Takabuki, Armstrong Produce, Tasaka Guri Guri, Diamond Bakery, KTA Super Stores, M. Miura Store, Marians Catering/Dots Restaurant, Satoru Abe, Ken Hayashida, Dave "D.K." Kodama, Anne Namba, and Roy Sakuma.

The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i (JCCH), a non-profit organization, strives to strengthen our diverse community by educating present and future generations in the evolving Japanese American experience in Hawai'i. It is located at 2454 South Beretania Street in Mō'ili'ili. The Cultural Center features a Community and Historical Gallery, Resource Center, Keshikan martial arts dojo, Seikan Japanese teahouse and Gift Shop. For more information call (808) 945-7633, email info@jcch.com or visit the website at www.jcch.com.