

U.S., Japan celebrate century long friendship

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FRIENDSHIP

NAVAL AIR FACILITY ATSUGI, Japan – In the year 1912, Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo presented approximately 3,000 cherry blossom trees to the city of Washington, D.C.

This was done in an effort to encourage a growing friendship between the two countries.

The first two were planted along the Potomac River by Helen Herron Taft, the First Lady of the time and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese Ambassador.

Today, Cherry Blossom trees still line the walk way along the Potomac River as a tribute of the friendship that still stands strong between the Japanese and the Americans.

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the gift given by Japan, the citizens of Seya Ward in Yokohama and personnel of Naval

Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi held a tree planting ceremony at Naval Support Facility Kamiseya during the 6th Annual Seya Festival.

Mr. Masato Yamada, vice mayor of Yokohama spoke on the significance of the location of the festival.

“Navy Road is one of the best viewing spots for cherry blossoms in the city,” said Yamada. “I believe this field is the most appropriate place to hold such a planting ceremony.”

Captain Eric Gardner, commanding officer of NAF Atsugi was also requested to give a few words at the festival.

“Though history once took our fate to an unwanted pathway, the cherry trees have remained there [in Washington, D.C.], symbolizing the friendship of ours that has now blossomed at the grassroots level and at the nation’s level.”

Gardner along side Mr. Masato Yamada, vice mayor of Yokohama planted both a Cherry Blossom tree to represent the gift that was given by Japan to the U.S. and a Dogwood tree to represent the gift that was given by the U.S. to Japan in return.

At the festival there was food and entertainment including the NAF Atsugi Bon Odori dancers who gave their last performance of the year.

Throughout the festival the spirit of friendship and camaraderie was exhibited by those in attendance which numbered more than 40,000.

“It is my sincere wish,” said Gardner, “That our friendship keeps growing and blooming for centuries to come while we enjoy freedom and prosperity together.”