

Greetings from the President's Office

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What I recall from the Sakura Cherry Blossoms

On the campus of Akita International University, located in the southern part of Akita city, Yoshino cherry trees provide a variety of sceneries from season to season, and give us a tunnel of blossoming flowers that hang from either sides of the road. And a student residence that stands in front of the cherry trees along the north road is even named "Sakura Village."

All of the cherry trees at AIU are large and old, but still bloom beautifully every year, which must be a wonderful sight for international students and the surrounding neighbors. However, most of the trees are actually infected with broom disease, or *Tengusu-byo* in Japanese, which deform the branches and make them flowerless and fruitless. And if left untreated, the trees can even die. My heart hurts whenever I see these old trees, and as President, I strongly feel that I need to do something.

Looking at the cherry blossoms on campus, I recall a memory almost 40 years ago when I was in a teaching position at Washington State University in the US. I met a student from Kagoshima, Japan at that time, Mr. Koichiro Iwasaki, a master's student in economics, who is now 62 years old. He frequently came over to my home to chat after our tutoring sessions of thesis advisor and advisee. We talked a lot about how universities in the US accept international students from all over the world and how it resulted in a great contribution to human resource development.

What is it that I can do for Washington State University that would give us the same opportunities as in the US? Just a precedent, at the Potomac River in Washington, cherry blossoms gifted from Japan would turn full bloom every year, which motivated us to dream big and to donate cherry trees that would make a similar row at Pullman, Washington State University.

However, it was not easy to purchase cherry seedlings in the US. We could not even find them there. Almost 20 years have passed and finally in 2000, I managed to purchase 160 seedlings from a Japanese company and donated them to WSU and the city of Pullman. They were planted and became in full bloom in spring at one of the famous spots in the university town.

While recalling this memory at the end of March, Mr. Iwasaki visited Akita to see me from Kagoshima. Now he is an auditor for the Iwasaki group, the largest company in southern Kyushu, which manages hotels, buses, and tourist facilities. He visited AIU once before to participate in a seminar for my former graduate students. And during these stays, he too felt sorry for the old and sick trees on campus and kindly proposed to donate cherry trees together with me

In fact, Mr. Iwasaki is a very charitable man and even established the "Iwasaki Scholarship Fund" at the University of Hawaii and the University of Washington in Seattle. I recall the cherry trees that we donated to the University and city of Pullman, and we started to make a plan to donate some trees again, this time to AIU. I am looking forward to seeing healthy cherry trees in full bloom in Akita.



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<http://www.asahi.com/area/akita/articles/MTW20190430051550001.html>