

MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, March 2024

—Voices of the WGO? Staff and Members of the Volunteer Guide Seminar—

Advertising March

"Yakyu siyoze!"

Let's play Baseball!!

Autographed with his message, three baseball gloves arrived at our school last January. Two gloves were for right-handed players and one was for a southpaw. As for young Major Leaguer Shohei Otani who recently joined the LA Dodgers, not a single day goes by without our hearing news of his activities. Absolutely, he is the Japanese superstar of this century.

This 29-year-old baseball player donated approximately 60,000 new gloves to 20,000 elementary schools across Japan. At the end of last January, at morning assembly held in the school gym, three lucky students were chosen to play catch with the new mitts in front of the other students.

The light brown and black colored design is very distinctive and stylish.

Shohei stated he hoped the kids would spend many happy, energetic days through baseball, and looked forward to sharing the field one day with someone who grew up playing with these gloves.

All of the students enjoyed Shohei's gifts and felt both his passion for baseball and support for the youth of Japan.

From April 2024, Shohei also appears in a new math textbook for 5th grade elementary school students in Japan. In the textbook, he comments that he sort of liked math in his boyhood, liked thinking and now, as a professional ball player, often uses math. He goes on to describe how he translates his hitting stance into a simple triangle shape and thinks about how to shift his weight within that stance.

I knew former Major Leaguer Ichiro Suzuki's success stories were in my daughters' high school English textbooks, but Shohei is the first celebrity to be featured in a math textbook officially edited by the government.

And even though growing up I hated both school subjects, I hope his words inspire more girls and boys to find reasons for learning math, even physics.

(Kay Kajiwara)

The city flower of Matsuyama is the camellia. The origin of this flower's importance to the city is said to be a stone monument erected at Isaniwaoka to commemorate Prince Shotoku's visit to Dogo Onsen. The dedication reads, "Camellia trees surround the hot spring and make it seem as if it were surrounded by trees, which are so spectacular that it looks as if it were covered in camellias."

Based on this inscription, the bush camellia was selected as the city flower of Matsuyama.

Last week I went to the camellia garden in Matsuyama General Park to enjoy the blossoming flowers.

Matsuyama Comprehensive Park has been designed so that visitors can enjoy flowers throughout the year. Seasonal blooms are placed in various planting locations, as the park aims to incorporate flowers and trees that emphasize Matsuyama's unique character. The camellia garden is one such example.

In this garden, 500 species of camellia are planted (including 300 Japanese species and 200 Western species).

In 1981, the city formed a sister city affiliation with Sacramento, a city on the West Coast of the United States, which shares with Matsuyama the same city flower, the camellia.

Camellias can be enjoyed from fall to late spring and come in a variety of colors, such as white, red, peach, and yellow. The blossoms range in size from less than 4 cm in diameter to 13 cm or more, and petals occur in single, double, thousand, lotus, and peony blooms.

Yesterday, I went to the "Iyo Tsubaki Meika Exhibition" held at Bansuiso. I felt the healing power of all the wonderful camellias. I bought a seedling called "Tamahime" to take home, said to be propagated from a camellia in Tamanoura, Goto Islands in Nagasaki prefecture and a camellia in Ehime. The photo shows a double flower with light crimson petals and white edges.

I cannot wait for next year's blooms.

(Hiroko)

The purpose of TV commercials is to remind people of a product and to encourage them to buy it. Commercials improve brand image, too.

I'm a franchise owner of an English school for children, and my company staff asked to advertise my classroom. A little of my lesson appeared on TV last month.

One Friday afternoon, a local TV station crew came to shoot one of my classes.

First, the timekeeper clipped a pin microphone on me. Then she held her stopwatch and cued me to start talking. I wasn't so nervous as I imagined I would be, and I was able to repeat several catchphrases on the second recording.

My students had been looking forward to appearing on TV and came to the class earlier than usual. In front of the giant camera and the long boom microphone, however, the children's expressions turned nervous.

I encouraged them, "Don't worry about making a mistake. It's okay. Do as usual!"

TV viewers are sensitive to whether publicity is credible or not. Thinking my lessons shouldn't sound as if I was reading a script, I started teaching as usual. I hoped it would air the way it was.

In the middle of the lesson, there occurred a discussion among the crew about the footage to be used. Then, the cameraman asked me to stand at a different angle. The timekeeper required us to film some parts again until they were okayed.

My company staff was watching everything and told the film crew not to interfere with my teaching so much but to talk in a low voice outside the classroom.

Finally, the TV crew left the room, saying, "Sorry we disturbed the class, but I think we shot a good video."

A week later, it was broadcast, and I was amazed at how our 2-hour filming schedule was crammed into a 60-second publicity spot.

Disappointingly, the scenes where the students and I were communicating with smiles were cut out.

Training English communication skills is one of the great features of my English school franchise, and I am excited to be able to promote it out loud, so I wish I could have edited the video.

At least I should have told the TV crew to broadcast a scene where we were having fun speaking English.

(Miwa N.)