COURIER-JOURNAL

Rap Around Rap Around Rap Arou

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Mercians Host Cultural Experience

By Joan M. Smith

Flashes of brilliant color flitted through the halls of Our Lady of Mercy High School last week as visiting Japanese girls, dressed in red, orange, green, purple and gold kimonos, converged on the convent sitting room to discuss their stay in the U.S. Immediately evident were their gracious smiles, twinkling eyes and willingness to answer questions, language barrier aside. Accompanying teachers Harumi Matfushita and Mutsuko Miyazaki, however, acted as interpreters and it wasn't long before there was the excited hum of conversation.

This Japanese-American get together was made possible through the efforts of Mrs. Shirley Sass, Mercy English teacher, and the Council on Inter Education Exchange (CIEE). While teaching in Japan last summer, Mrs. Sass investigated the possiblity of inviting Japanese students to visit Mercy. During the evolving negotiations she discovered what was desired, was a link between a Japanese all-girls school and a similar one in the U.S. With the blessings of Sister Mary Bonaventure, Mercy's Bonaventure, Mercy's principal, Mrs. Sass offered Mercy and the cultural visit became a reality!

The young ladies, all from Tokoha Gakuen Senior High School, stayed with individual Mercy families. They quickly adapted to American life, "making themselves a part of our community," Mrs. Sass stated.

What surprised the visitors the most about U.S. students? "The makeup, the jewelry," said Yoko Kano pointing to her fingers, "especially the rings."

According to school sources, Japanese girls are not allowed to wear makeup,

America Conference in Olean, March 30, April 1. Forty

students from the Foreman

Center attended:

Harumi, who teaches English at the girls school, was impressed by America (vastness. "Everything is so big," she exclaimed adding; "The farms are very large."

In talking about the girls high school, Harumi estimated the enrollment to be about 1,800. She explained that the school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and is over at 3:30 p.m. Mrs. Sass, however, explained the girls do not go right home but continue into the evening hours, not arriving home until 6 or 7 p.m.

During these after school hours, they pursue addition studies, make up classe missed, participate in clut and athletic activities lik basketball, volleyball, terms and Kendo (Japanese fencing) Civics, Biology, Art and gym. The teachers explained the Japanese school system is divided into six years elementary; three years, junior and three years senior high level. Entrance to the universities is highly competitive and requires the taking of difficult examinations.

While on this side of the ocean, the girls didn't miss the American TV syndrome and according to Yoko the cartoons, or "animations" as she called them were her favorite programs. Their Mercy hostesses made sure they were well entertained with visits to downtown Rochester, Niagara Falls; and treated to steak dinners, pizza and disco parties.

friendship between the Mercians and their proteges which according to the girls had developed right from the start.

"We talked and joked about the same things," one hostess said, "boys, clothes and music."

The Japanese students were a study in contrasts — the traditional versus the contemporary. Though dressed in the ancient kimono, their future plans and dreams were as modern as those of any American student. Rumiko Nakanishi said she wanted to be a broadcast journalist. A few of them wished to be stewardesses while others had their sights set on becoming teachers. One young lady

friendship between the veterinarian while another Mercians and their proteges wanted to be a banker.

> Sayonaras were said last Saturday when the girls left for home, not only taking with them but leaving behind a lifetime of memories. And the one exciting memory which will standout for Mrs. Sass is "The way the American parents and students reached out to them, and the way the Japanese embraced the American people.

> "I hope," she went onto say, "we've started a hands across the sea idea."

Winner

John Dempsey, a McQuaid junior, was the recipient of the

Ins non curural experience

Sister Bonaventure and Mrs. Sass pose with Japanese teachers Harumi Matfushita and Mutsuko Miyazaki and their students a few days before the girls departed for home. All the Japanese young ladies agreed that the best experience of their visit was staying with the Mercy families.

Photo by Susan McKinney



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RapAround weekly will run a photo of a group of students taken somewhere in the diocese. One person will be circled and it that person brings the clipping to the Courier-Journal before noon of the Tuesday following our publication date, he or she will receive \$5. This week's photo was taken at Our Lady of Mercy during class. The person circled above should bring the clipping to Joan M. Smith, Courier-Journal, by noon Tuesday, April 17 to receive \$5.