

## 姉妹都市の功績者「喜恵子ウィタカー様」を偲んで

### In Memory of Kieko Whitaker

キエコ様と出逢ったのは、かいじ国体の際フェアフィールド市長様一行に通訳として来蕪された時でした。私は、市の担当者としてこの事業をどう進めて良いのかまったくわからずとまどうばかり、そんな私に丁寧に答えてくれる日本語の話せるキエコ様が唯一の頼みでした。それから約一年後に両市で高校生の交換留学生事業をすることになり、高校生を引率し来蕪され、市内のいたる所で礼儀正しく流暢な日本語で通訳されていました。キエコ様が話される日本語の美しさと奥深しさに感銘しました。

「私の母国語ですもの何年もアメリカに住んでいても忘れる訳がありません。私は純粋な日本人です。」と誇らしげに日本語を使うのを楽しんでいる様でした。キエコ様のコミュニケーションの上手さはどこで学んだかお聞きしましたら「ITC」という教育組織に入り訓練したとの事。蕪崎でも興味のある女性数名が集まり「ITC蕪崎クラブ」を作り国際議事法や教育プログラムに従ってコミュニケーションの訓練を行い今年で30周年を迎えたとの事です。

キエコ様は昭和30年ごろ入間の米軍基地に通訳として勤務しご主人と出逢い花嫁衣装を船に乗せて米国へ渡り、その後ご主人と家族と共に三沢基地や沖縄基地で生活し、退役後はフェアフィールド市で生活をしました。ご主人は日頃「困っている日本人がいたら助けてあげなさい。日本と米国の平和の架け橋になりなさい。」と言い、キエコ様の活動に理解し協力し援助をおしませんでした。キエコ様が助けた日本人留学生も何人かいたそうです。蕪崎市の事業の他にも日本へ来る機会があったら必ず蕪崎へ立ち寄りました。宿は、私の家「高野ホテル」でした。滞在中は、食事は日本食です。焼き魚、煮物、冷ややっこ、ぬか漬けなどおいしそうに食べていました。オフの日は家族とドライブを楽しみました。活字が大好きなので土産はいつも高野書店の本をご自分で選んでいました。亡くなられてからは中央公園にあるキエコ・エルバート夫妻の記念碑に手を合わせています。



高野 秀代

Hideyo Takano

※「ITC」とは、インターナショナルトレーニングコミュニケーションの略。国際議事法やコミュニケーションの伝達訓練を行う教育組織。

\*「ITC」refers to International Training Communication, an educational organization that provides training in communication and International Rules of Order.

I met Kieko when she came to Nirasaki as interpreter for the Mayor of Fairfield for the Kaiji National Sports Festival. For me, as a city representative that had no idea what I was doing, she was the only person I could rely on, kindly answering my questions in polite Japanese as I floundered around without a clue what to do. One year after that, it was decided between the cities to undertake the foreign exchange program for high school students, and Kieko came back to Nirasaki leading the group, going around the city interpreting fluently with courteous Japanese. I was deeply impressed by the beauty and depth of Kieko's Japanese. "It's my mother language; I may have lived many years in America, but of course I would not forget it. I am Japanese," she would say, proudly enjoying using the language. When I asked her where she learned to be so skilled at communication, she told me she trained at an educational organization called "ITC"\*. A number of women in Nirasaki took interest in this and started the "ITC Nirasaki Club", where they have been training communication according to International Rules of Order and educational programs for 30 years as of this year.

Around 1955, Kieko worked as an interpreter on Iruma Air Base, where she met her husband and upon marriage, sailed back to America with him. After that, together with husband and family, she lived on Misawa Air Base and on-base in Okinawa, and upon retirement moved to Fairfield. Her husband would always say, "If you ever see a Japanese person struggling, help them.

Become the bridge of peace between America and Japan," as he supported in all of her activities. I have heard that innumerable Japanese exchange students were beneficiaries of Kieko's assistance. Even when she was not on city business, any time Kieko found an opportunity to come to Japan, she would always visit Nirasaki. Her accommodation when she came was always my house, AKA the "Takano Hotel". While she was here, the food was all Japanese cuisine. She would eat grilled fish, nimono (simmered cuisine), chilled tofu, rice-powder pickles and more with gusto. On days off, we would enjoy going on drives with the family. She loved printed type, so as a souvenir she would always select a book from the Takano Book Shop. Since she passed away, I always give a prayer at the Kieko and Elbert Memorial at Nirasaki Central Park.

