



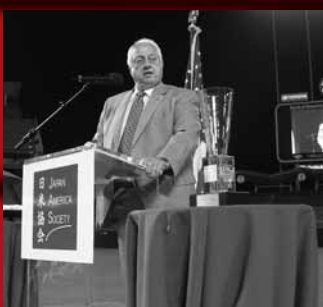
*Centennial of Promise®*

100  
周年 | YEARS  
1909-2009

日米協会  
JAPAN  
AMERICA  
SOCIETY

JAPAN AMERICA SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

# *The First 100 Years*





*Centennial of Promise®*



## *A Brief History of the* JAPAN AMERICA SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Japan America Society of Southern California grew out of the need for a group in which both Japanese and Americans could meet socially on common ground. In the ensuing hundred years, it has developed to meet the challenges of changing times.

In the Spring of 1907, the Japan Society was established in New York City. Inspired by that development, a group of Japanese and American friends met in October of the following year at the home of the Reverend and Mrs. Charles C. Pierce to discuss the establishment of a similar organization in Los Angeles. There were sixteen people at this planning meeting. This was considered a good omen in view of the fact that there are sixteen petals in the Imperial chrysanthemum.

On February 21, 1909, the Society was officially launched at a banquet held in the Y.M.C.A. building in downtown Los Angeles. Some eighty Americans and Japanese attended. The organization was named the Japanese-American Fraternity and the motto "Mutual Friendship - Mutual Harmony" was adopted. Dr. Harvey Hugo Guy, a noted scholar and Superintendent of Japanese missions in California, was elected president.

No Japanese Consulate then existed in Los Angeles but Japanese immigrants and their families had banded together on a number of associations. They constituted a minority, which, in spite of the hard work and admirable traits of its members, often suffered from discriminatory practices. The majority was excluded from the social life of the community at large, and Japanese visitors were normally limited to meeting only their own countrymen. The Society helped to alleviate some of these problems.

### Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California

One of the Japanese associations with which the Society first collaborated was the Central Japanese Association of Los Angeles, which worked to assist new Japanese immigrants. After the Pacific War, its name changed to the *Los Angeles Japanese American Association*. It continued to represent the Japanese community and was regarded as an authoritative body in the Japanese American community. Another group, the Little Tokyo Business Association, was dealing with local development and vitalization. In 1949, the two associations merged into what became the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (JCCSC). Since that time, the Society and JCCSC have worked closely together on a number of important projects and programs.

Original membership of the Society was comprised of Christian missionaries who had served in Japan, educators, Japanese business and professional men, a few Japanese students, and several prominent American businessmen. From the beginning, a third to a half of the members were either Japanese or of Japanese descent.

A major task at first was the entertainment of Japanese visitors to Los Angeles. A Trade Mission of fifty members headed by Baron Eiichi Shibusawa was welcomed in the first years of the Society. From then on, the Society and its members hosted a succession of missionaries, academics, parliamentary missions, and government officials.



*Banquet honoring The Hon. Ayao Hattori, former member of the Japanese Diet at the Federation Club, Los Angeles, June 18, 1913.*

## The First Challenge

The first challenge to the Society arose in connection with the introduction of anti-alien land legislation in the California State Legislature. Federal law denied the right of citizenship to immigrants of Asian ancestry. The proposed state legislation would take away the right of land ownership from aliens ineligible for citizenship. In letters to the legislators, the Japanese farmers pointed out that,

*“Many Californians offered to sell us their unimproved or non-profitable lands and we bought those lands, at their own price with money earned honestly by the sweat of our brows, and have brought such lands to a perfect state of production. Now in the name of Justice and righteousness, are we to be deprived of the works of our own labor and enterprise?”*

In 1913, under the vigorous leadership of Society president F.D.R. Moote, the support of Presidents David Starr Jordan of Stanford University and George F. Bovard of the University of Southern California was secured to oppose the passage of the bill.

Dr. Jordan argued that the bill was inequitable and discriminatory since it applied only to Asians and that it “discouraged the increase of good citizenship and national wealth.” Moote attacked the federal law also, pointing out the danger of denying to “any class of inhabitants rights to which their intelligence entitles them.”

Although the law was subsequently enacted, the campaign for its defeat succeeded in bringing the Society closer to the local Japanese associations, and many leading citizens, incensed by the injustice of the law, joined the Society in order to help redress this wrong. In fact, the interest engendered by the campaign resulted in a substantial increase in the Society’s activity during 1914. The Society met at least once each month and several public meetings were held at which 500-800 people gathered.

## The Quiet Years

In 1915, a Japanese Consulate was opened in Los Angeles and the closest liaison was maintained between it and the Society. The Society organized banquets of welcome and farewell for the Consulate staff, introduced staff members to the community and, at one time, co-sponsored receptions given for the local Consular Corps. In return, the Consulate facilitated trips to Japan, provided Society members with valuable introductions, and provided other services directly to the Society.

In the same year, the Society was renamed the *Japanese-American League of Los Angeles*, a name which was used for only two years before it was changed to the *Japan Society of Southern California*. In 1928, the name was changed to the *Japan-American Society of Los Angeles* and in 1936 the final “n” was dropped from “American.” The present name, *Japan America Society of Southern California*, was adopted in 1959 just prior to the Society’s incorporation.

The period 1916 to 1928 might be termed the “quiet years” as the Society carried on its traditional functions. Society president Bellows, who was State Corporation Commissioner until 1922 when he resigned to become president of the Pacific Securities Corporation, emphasized the Society’s social status and broad representation of the community’s elite. The Society’s vice presidents included:

George I. Cochran, President of Pacific Mutual Life Insurance Company;

John S. Mitchell, former President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce;

Mrs. Chester Ashley, President of the Ebell Club;

Mrs. Edward H. Noe, President of the Council of Presidents of the Los Angeles Federation of Parent-Teachers Associations; and,

Mrs. Seward A. Simons, President of the Friday Morning Club.

Dr. Waterhouse became Society president after the passage of the controversial Exclusion Act. He represented the Japanese community in Washington, D.C. and wrote pamphlets attacking the validity of the alien land laws. The Society helped secure the passage of the Cable Act, which permitted American born women to marry men of alien birth without losing their citizenship.

## The Silver Anniversary

Under the leadership of real estate developer William I. Clendenon, the Society was extensively reorganized. Meetings were held on a regular monthly basis - usually on the second Monday of each month - and alternated between American and Japanese homes, including that of the Japanese Consul. A librarian was elected, and publications on Japanese art and culture were collected for the use by the membership and the public. The Society sponsored the first annual Pacific Coast Chrysanthemum Show and Art Exhibit.

From 1931 to 1940, anniversary banquets were held aboard passenger liners of the N.Y.K. Line. They were black-tie affairs featuring distinguished speakers, excellent entertainment and dancing. Each year more than two hundred people gathered in the ship’s gaily decorated dining salons. The governors of California and the mayors of Los Angeles extended greetings in person.

The Emperor’s brother, His Imperial Highness Prince Takamatsu, and his consort were welcomed in 1931, but the crowning event of that period took place in 1934 when the Society celebrated its Silver Anniversary. Prince Iyesato Tokugawa, former president of the House of Peers, and at that time president of the America-Japan Society of Tokyo, was the principal guest of honor. Leaders from every field of endeavor extended greetings to the Society during the banquet aboard the *M.S. Tatsuta Maru*.



Officers of the Society, 1934.

## The Society in Recess

Following the Japanese takeover in Manchuria and the subsequent rise to power of the military clique in Japan, American sentiment toward that country grew more and more antagonistic. Japanese residents were blamed and their American friends came to be viewed with suspicion if not hostility. The press carried ominous headlines about the “yellow peril.” Meanwhile, discrimination against Asians increased.

In spite of these attacks, American members of the Society strongly defended their stand on behalf of mutual understanding. Their position at the time was printed as follows,

*“The Society has not been a forum for argument. On debatable questions regarding the policy of the Japanese Government, it has presented only the Japanese side, leaving the members looking elsewhere for contrary views. In this way, no antagonisms have been developed, and no matter what Americans might think of Japanese policy, or Japanese might think of American policy, their criticisms have not been presented at the meetings of the Society. This has been in full harmony with the objects of the Society which has been to acquaint each race with the culture and history of the other, and to emphasize every common ground of their life.”*

Some Society members saw a strong Japan as the only bastion against the spread of Communism throughout the Far East. Others thought that Foreign Minister Matsuoka, who had spent much of his youth in the United States, might bring a new era of peace to Asia, but they were dismayed to learn that he was the virtual architect of the Tri-Partite Pact with Germany and Italy.

Immediately following the Japanese attack on the U.S. Navy gunboat *Panay* while she was anchored in the Yangtze River outside of Nanjing on December 12, 1937 (“The Panay Incident”), able and energetic civic leader Louise Ward Watkins became the Society’s president. A former president of the Friday Morning Club, a candidate for U.S. Senator from California, and later a president of the Nichibei Fujin Kai

(“Japan-America Woman’s Association”), Mrs. Watkins boldly demanded understanding of Japan’s problems by the American people. She inaugurated new programs that emphasized Japan’s cultural heritage. “A Day in Japan” at Sierra Madre’s Wisteria Gardens and “A Nite in Nippon” at the Hollyhock House were added to the list of the Society’s annual events.

Concerts and piano recitals were featured. The Society’s programs became the social events of the season and the membership roster began to read like *Who’s Who*. In May 1940, Mrs. Watkins ended her term of office by sailing on the maiden voyage of the *M.S. Nitta Maru* to the countries of the Far East. Dr. Henry Weitzel of Pasadena Junior College carried on as Society president while Mrs. Watkins enjoyed a magnificent tour of Japan, Korea and Manchuria. She spoke frequently throughout Japan, including two times before the America-Japan Society of Tokyo.

On December 6, 1941, the Society gave a farewell luncheon at The Biltmore Hotel in honor of the Society’s vice president, Masae Higashikuze. Higashikuze was the manager of the Los Angeles office of Nihon Yusen Kaisha (NYK Line), a Japanese steamship company, and he was scheduled to return to Japan. With much feeling, he told the members that he wanted them to remember that no matter what might happen, he would always cherish the many friendships made among members of the Society. By the next evening, many of the Society’s Japanese members were held in detention and the Society’s American members were interrogated by the F.B.I.

On December 8, President Weitzel resigned, stating that there was “no place for such a Society in a time of war.” At the same time he wrote U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull that he was convinced that the first generation Japanese (Issei) “almost without exception” would be “loyal to the United States of America” and that he was “even more sure of the Nisei” of whose “basic loyalty . . . there can be not the slightest doubt.” The remaining officers of the Society met and declared the Society to be “in recess.” Past Society president, F.D.R. Moote served as caretaker until the organization could be reactivated, and the funds in the treasury were given to the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) for use in their numerous welfare projects. Throughout the war years, both F.D.R. Moote and the Society’s future counsel, J. Marion Wright, did everything possible to protect the interests and property of those Japanese friends who had been forcefully relocated to internment camps.

## The Society’s Rebirth

Shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Peace with Japan (“San Francisco Peace Treaty”) on September 8, 1951, a small group of members discussed the possible revival of the Society. On December 1, 1951, the Society’s name was used in invitations to many former members to join in welcoming former Consul Chuichi Ohashi during his brief visit to the city.

The U.S. Occupation of Japan ended in 1952. The Society was reborn and the Consulate General of Japan was opened in Los Angeles. On August 28, 1952, the Society held a dinner at



the Rosslyn Hotel to mark the appointment of Kenichiro Yoshida as the first Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles. That same year, Society counsel, J. Marion Wright made history by convincing the Supreme Court to invalidate California's alien land laws in the Sei Fujii case. The stage was set for growth in the relationship between Japan and the U.S.

In 1953, over 750 excited people gathered at the Ambassador Hotel on October 1 to greet the young Crown Prince Akihito on his first visit to the United States. That year the Society welcomed Japan's newly appointed Ambassador Eikichi Araki, as well as applauded the naturalization of several prominent Issei members.



*Crown Prince Akihito shakes hands with singer Dinah Shore as Society President and Mrs. Merritt look on. October 1, 1953.*

In 1954, George Eastman, business executive and former president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, was elected Society President and an enlarged Council met at least quarterly. During the next five years, distinguished visitors such as Foreign Ministers Mamoru Shigemitsu and Katsuo Okazaki, Ambassador Sadao Iguchi, Mme. Miki Sawada, President Takashi Komatsu of the America-Japan Society of Tokyo, Professor Gunji Hosono, former Ambassador Setsuzo Sawada, and officers of the Motion Picture Producers' Association of Japan were entertained at special receptions, breakfasts, luncheons and dinner banquets. During 1954 and 1955 receptions welcomed newly arrived Japanese foreign students at the Hollyhock House.



*Society members entertain Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura, former Ambassador to the U.S.*



*Banquet honoring His Excellency Sadao Iguchi, Ambassador of Japan to the U.S., June 3, 1954.*

On June 27, 1957, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi was entertained at a luncheon at the Statler Hotel in Los Angeles. Over 1,300 people gathered in the Pacific Ballroom. That same year, Society president George Eastman and a committee composed of Society officers reorganized the Society, began work on its incorporation and stepped up its social and cultural programming. Ted Giesler was appointed the Society's first executive director in April 1957 and additional funds to pay his salary were donated by George Eastman and future Society president, Victor M. Carter.



*President Eastman hosts Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, Consul General Yukio Hasumi and Ambassador Koichiro Asakai. Wilshire Country Club, August 8, 1959.*

## Golden Anniversary

In 1959, the Society planned to commemorate its Golden Anniversary with an appropriate celebration, but, at the critical moment, Typhoon Vera (Isewan), the strongest typhoon to hit Japan in recorded history, severely damaged Los Angeles' sister city of Nagoya. Plans for the celebration were cancelled

and all the Society's energy and funds were diverted to aid the typhoon's victims. Society president George Eastman called Los Angeles Mayor Norris Poulson's attention to the disaster, and the Mayor extended every facility in order that efforts could be coordinated with the JCCSC in raising funds and sending clothes and blankets. The Red Cross later wrote Society president Eastman that, "the amount contributed by Americans in greater Los Angeles totals \$42,588, the largest amount of disaster relief funds contributed by a single geographical section of the United States to the Japanese people since the 1923 earthquake."

The year 1960 marked the 100th anniversary of the opening of trade and diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States, and appropriate observances were planned in both countries to celebrate the event. On March 29, 1960, John Anson Ford, former chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and chairman of the California Fair Employment Practices Commission, was elected Society president. Society counsel J. Marion Wright announced the final incorporation of the Society and the securing of its tax-exempt status.



*Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko are shown Will Rogers' home in Will Rogers State Park. President John Anson Ford, State Park Commissioner Will Rogers, Jr., Princess Michiko, movie actor Leo Carrillo and the Crown Prince. September 26, 1960.*



*Officers of the Society and Japanese Chamber of Commerce take part in a tableau depicting President Buchanan receiving the first diplomatic mission from Japan. This was part of the 1960 Centennial observance.*

Several brilliant social functions were held, including a reception for actors of the Grand Kabuki, a Japanese garden party, and receptions for U.S. Ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer and Japanese Ambassador Koichiro Asakai. However, the most successful event of the year was the luncheon and garden party held in honor of Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko on September 26 at Will Rogers State Park. Nearly 1,750 people gathered on this occasion to meet Their Imperial Highnesses.

## The New Look

On May 25, 1961, Victor M. Carter, president of the largest film processing plant in the world and noted philanthropist, was elected Society president. It was a year of significant change. He initiated a vigorous program schedule and reorganized the organization's administration. Carter

also launched a monthly Cultural Program Series and a Quarterly Bulletin. At the same time, he stressed the need for the closest cooperation with the office of the Consul General and with Japanese American organizations such as the JCCSC and JACL. As the Society's program of activities expanded, its membership increased. During the early 1960's, the Society was to become second only to the Japan Society of New York in membership and activities, a position it has held ever since.

On September 7, 1961, the Society hosted The Honorable Ryotaro Azuma, Governor of Tokyo, who spoke of Tokyo's issues as a growing city and about plans for the 1964 Olympic Games. Later that evening, the general membership was treated to a report by the Nagoya Student Mission, a group of four high school students and a chaperone from the Los Angeles City School system sent by the Society on an eleven-day goodwill tour to Nagoya. The students' trip was part of the Student Exchange Program, inaugurated by the Society in 1960, to benefit the Sister City relationship between Los Angeles and Nagoya.



*Society Council, 1961-1962.*



*Undersheriff Harold C. Marlowe presents tickets to the 1960 Sheriff's Rodeo to Michio Kuzumaki of Meiwa High School, on the occasion of the Nagoya Student Mission's visit to L.A.*



*L.A. Student Mission to Nagoya in front of Nagoya Castle.*

In 1961 the Society also began awarding the Victor M. Carter Perpetual Award that honored citizens of the greater Los Angeles area who have done the most to foster and perpetuate friendship and understanding between the United States and Japan. For the next twenty-three years, the award was presented at special occasions, including the Japanese-American Debutante Balls in the late 1960's. Some of the award recipients include: Dr. Carroll Parish, Katsuma Mukaeda, Fred I. Wada, Sakaye Aratani, Sydney Kronenthal, Jean Tsuchiya, Roy L. Ash, Dr. Hans Baerwald, Dr. Akira Kikukawa, John C. McHose, Maria & Ambassador James D. Hodgson, Dr. Koichi Kawana, James Clavell, Richard King, Frank Kuwahara and Dr. Franklin D. Murphy.

## Asia America Symphony Orchestra

The Japanese Philharmonic Orchestra of Los Angeles, a community ensemble of union and non-union musicians was founded in 1961 by Dr. Aikira Kikukawa, who served as its conductor for three decades. In 1991, under the direction of former L.A. Philharmonic violist and assistant conductor, Heiichiro Ohyama, it became a fully professional orchestra, was renamed the Japan America Symphony Orchestra and shared office space with the Society. To better reflect the diversity of Los Angeles' growing Asian population, it was renamed the Asia America Symphony Orchestra in 1995. Today, under its conductor and music director David Benoit, the symphony combines performances in jazz and classical compositions within the same program.

## Japan Business Association of Southern California

The Japan Business Association of Southern California (JBA) was founded in 1961. It is a nonprofit economic organization with the mission to promote its members' common interests by providing Japanese language membership services, supporting local education and contributing to local communities. From the very beginning, the Society and JBA have enjoyed a close working and collaborative relationship, and the president of JBA has often served on the Society's council, and later its board of directors.

On January 19, 1962, the Society, in cooperation with the Foreign Trade Association of Southern California and the World Trade Department of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, hosted a luncheon at the Statler-Hilton Hotel for Nelson A. Stitt, Director of the United States-Japan Trade Council. Director Stitt presented facts on the state of trade between the two countries, emphasizing its importance to California's prosperity.



*Farewell Banquet for Consul General Yukio Hasumi at the Statler-Hilton, January 10, 1962.*

Two years later the Society began an annual Japan-America Trade Luncheon in the ballrooms of The Biltmore and Statler Hilton hotels. These luncheons featured principal

speakers on topics including, "Compete, Co-operate or Co-ordinate?" and "Japan Through the 1970's". These were extremely large affairs with planning that included a Japan America Trade Luncheon Committee with sub-committees for invitations, reservations and hostesses. The luncheons included very handsome invitations and elaborate programs with beautiful Japanese artwork. Japan Air Lines sponsored the events' printing and the programs included its slogan of the time, "The Calm Beauty of Japan at Almost the Speed of Sound."

From 1965 until 1968, the Society's anniversaries were celebrated with the "Japanese-American Debutante Ball," black tie events that were held at the Ambassador and Century Plaza hotels. During the dazzling proceedings, "each debutante, dressed in all-white formal attire, entered the stage, curtsied and stepped down the stairs as her father came to meet her. After the last debutante was escorted to the ballroom floor, the Tak Shindo Orchestra played the first waltz of the evening as fathers and daughters danced." The entire proceedings of the second Japanese-American Debutante Ball in 1966 were televised in Japan by NHK television, and each Debutante Ball featured Hollywood celebrities serving as emcees, including movie producer Steve Parker, film star John Gavin and others. The last Debutante Ball in 1968 also commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the Meiji Period.



*Several of The Debutantes who participated in the Second Japanese-American Debutante Ball. February 12, 1966.*



*Miss Linda Yoshiko Aratani is assisted by her father, George T. Aratani, at the First Japanese-American Debutante Ball. The Cocanut Grove, Ambassador Hotel, February 21, 1965.*

On the occasion of the Society's 58th Anniversary, the first African American on the Los Angeles City Council, The Honorable Gilbert W. Lindsay (9th District), passed a resolution declaring the Society's founding date of February 21 as "Japan America Friendship Day" throughout the City of Los Angeles.

## Annual Society Golf Tournament

In May 1968, the Society's Council agreed to hold an annual Golf Tournament. Mrs. Sakaye Aratani was named chair of the tournament, a role she would serve in until the

early 1980s. Thanks to the efforts of Consul General Toshiro Shimanouchi, who served as the tournament's honorary chairman, a magnificent thirteen-inch solid sterling silver trophy was donated by Foreign Minister Takeo Miki as a perpetual award for the tournaments' winner. The inaugural Golf Tournament took place on July 31, 1968, at Huntington Seacliff Country Club in Huntington Beach. The entry fee was \$7 per player plus \$5 for dinner. Dr. John Kashiwabara was the low net winner with a score of 70.



*John C. McHose, Consul General Shimanouchi, Katsuma Mukaeda and George T. Aratani. 1st annual Golf Tournament at Huntington Seacliff Country Club, July 31, 1968.*

Twenty-five years later, under the leadership of Michael J. Feyder, the annual Society Golf Tournament was renamed the Japan America Golf Classic and continues to be a premier and sold out event. Held at private golf clubs in the greater





*Ty Hamano, Shinako Takasugi, Tournament Chair Sakaye Aratani and Sally Yoshikawa. 2nd Annual Golf Tournament at Huntington Seacliff Country Club, July 31, 1969.*

Los Angeles area, the event boasts one of the area's largest silent auctions as well as door and raffle prize giveaways. Much to the delight of the Society's non-golfers, in 2004 the Japan America Tennis Open was added as a concurrent and popular event.



*Chairman Emeritus Walter F. Beran, Toyota President Yuki Togo, Society Co-Vice Chair Cindy Andreotti and Consul General Shotaro Yachi. 29th Annual Golf Classic at Mesa Verde Country Club, September 15, 1997.*



*Society chairman Ron Hartwig and Consul General Masaharu Kohno present the Japan America Cup to Keiko Rosensteel, 33rd Annual Golf Classic at Yorba Linda Country Club, September 10, 2001.*



*2008 Society Tennis Open at Rolling Hills Country Club.*

## 1970's: Emphasis on Japanese Culture

During the 1970's the Society carried on its traditional functions of hosting public affairs events, anniversary dinners, annual golf tournaments and annual Japanese student receptions for freshmen students arriving from Japan. However, the focus for the Society was the important work of its Cultural Affairs Committee, which produced top quality programs to increase knowledge and better understanding of Japanese arts and culture. These included regular programs on the "Living Arts of Japan," kabuki, tanka, noh, bonsai, woodblock printing and literature.

## Japanese American Cultural & Community Center

Founded in 1971 by visionary Issei and Nisei (first and second generation) Japanese Americans, the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC) is one of the largest ethnic arts and cultural centers of its kind in the United States. Its mission is to present, perpetuate, transmit and promote Japanese and Japanese American arts and culture to diverse audiences, and to provide a center to enhance community programs. Construction on the JACCC's facilities in Little Tokyo took place between 1978 and 1983, and for nearly a decade after its completion, the Society was one of many non-profit organizations that enjoyed office space in the JACCC's Center Building. Today, the Society and JACCC enjoy collaborations and co-presenting cultural events on a regular basis.

With the completion of the JACCC, and with the growing strength in the economic and political relationship between Japan and the United States, there were discussions among the Society's Council about the need for expanding its programming with additional attention to public affairs, business and U.S.-Japan economic affairs. They shifted the Society's attention.

## Changes and Growth

An example of the new focus for the Society was the "U.S.-Japan Symposium" held on October 26, 1978 at the South Coast Plaza Hotel in Costa Mesa. The half-day Symposium hosted business leaders and economists discussing U.S. and Japan trade imbalances and export possibilities. The six panelists and three keynote speakers included Consul General Wataru Miyakawa and Eric Silberstein, Director, U.S. Department of Commerce.

In February 1979 the Society hosted the Biennial National Conference for the Japan America Societies of the United States. The main purpose of the conference was "to stimulate development of relations between Japan and America in economic, cultural and political matters, and to provide an open forum for evaluation and exploration of the current and future status of U.S.-Japan relations." The conference included the Society's 70th Anniversary Banquet with His Excellency Fumihiko Togo, Ambassador of Japan to the United States, and the 15th annual Japan-America Trade Luncheon with David Rockefeller, Chairman and CEO of Chase Manhattan Bank. That conference had even more significance.

On the occasion of the Society's 70th Anniversary, the first Japanese American elected to the State of California legislature, Paul T. Bannai (R) 53rd Assembly District, together with James R. Mills (D) 40th District, passed a resolution declaring February 21 as "Japan America Friendship Day" throughout the State of California.

## National Association of Japan-America Societies, Inc.

During the 1979 Biennial National Conference, the Japan America Societies of the United States officially became the National Association of Japan-America Societies, Inc. (NAJAS) under its first chairman, former United States Ambassador to Japan, U. Alexis Johnson. Today, NAJAS is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and it continues to strengthen cooperation and understanding between the peoples of Japan and the U.S. by providing programs, services, and information to, and facilitating cooperation among, its member societies throughout North America.

## Japan External Trade Organization, Los Angeles

In 1982 the Japanese government-related organization, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) opened a Los Angeles office to promote mutually beneficial trade, investment and technology exchanges between Japan and America. For the past two decades, JETRO Los Angeles' chief executive director has served as an active member of the Society's board. The Society and JETRO Los Angeles also co-collaborate and co-present business and trade related programming up to four times a year.

## The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

The Japan Foundation is an independent administrative institution whose purpose is to promote international cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and overseas countries. In February 1983, the Japan Foundation Los Angeles Office opened doors in Little Tokyo to conduct and support arts and cultural programs for the Western United States. Today, it is called The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles and is located in the Wells Fargo building on Bunker Hill. The Society often enjoys co-presenting film screenings, author lectures and other cultural events with The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles.

In September 1983, the Society began to provide its members a corporate membership directory. Additional new services for Society's corporate members included a news clipping service, press summaries of all public affairs programs, a publication service of articles dealing with the Japan-U.S. economic relationship, and a number of private, off-the-record programs exclusively for corporate members. New corporate levels of membership were instituted and named "Patron" and "Benefactor."

## Orange County Japanese American Association

The Orange County Japanese American Association (OCJAA) held its opening ceremony on November 1, 1986. OCJAA is a nonprofit led by Japanese American leaders that realized the need for Japanese language social services. They publish and distribute the "Orange Network," a bilingual monthly social service magazine, as well as provide special events to improve the life and well-being of the Japanese

Americans in Orange County. In the early 1990's the Society and OCJAA began collaborating and co-presenting one or more events each year, including an "Orange County Welcome Reception" for all newly posted Consul Generals of Japan.

During the second half of the 1980s, Japan enjoyed astonishing and resilient growth. By the end of the decade, Japanese stock prices had risen three-fold while land prices had risen by four times. By any measure these were extraordinary increases in asset prices (though they also reflected much speculative activity). U.S. media sensationalized Japanese firms' purchase of premier real estate such as Pebble Beach Resort, Rockefeller Center, and many signature buildings in downtown Los Angeles. U.S. academics and business and government decision-makers put massive effort into studying Japanese practices and adopting those that could be transplanted to the United States. The chairman of the Society during this exciting time was Walter F. Beran, the Co-Vice Chairman Emeritus of accounting firm Ernst & Young, as well as a visionary leader, an accomplished businessman and a strong advocate of civic duty. Walter F. Beran's leadership and strong connections and friendships with Japanese senior executives, combined with the energetic creativity of executive director, Steve C. Clemens, boosted the Society visibility and stature. Membership grew dramatically and innovative programming benefited both the Society's membership and the public.

### 5:01 Club

In 1988, the Society created the "5:01 Club," a networking reception that was to take place after working hours, thus the one-minute-after-five-o'clock title. The 5:01 Club was a originally a separate level of membership and it was supported by the JBA and the JCCSC. Its purpose was to foster closer relations between the Japanese and American business communities. The receptions took place monthly and featured no agendas and no speakers - just refreshments and an exchange of ideas and opportunities to meet new people. The first reception took place at the Boys & Girls Club of the Los Angeles Harbor and refreshments included chips, dip and soda. The 5:01 Club grew quickly and within three years, thanks largely to the Japanese "Bubble Economy," the Society had waiting lists of U.S. and Japanese companies and organizations that wanted to serve as a host. 5:01 Clubs since have been hosted in the lobbies of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., Nissan Motor Company, South Coast Plaza Shopping Resort, Holiday Inn Torrance, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bulgari and Escada on Rodeo Drive, Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, The Montage in Laguna Beach and other fine hotels, resorts, gardens and restaurants.

### Kokusai Shimin Sho "International Citizens Award"

In 1988, after two years without a major fundraiser, and with all eyes on Japan as its economy soared to new levels, the

board created the perpetual Kokusai Shimin Sho "International Citizens Award," to be awarded at the Society's Anniversary Dinner & Gala Celebrations. The Award honors and recognizes "individuals, businesses or organizations that have substantively and significantly enhanced the Japan-United States relationship and that are committed to the strengthening of bonds between the two nations." The first recipient of the International Citizens Award was Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone at the Society's 89th Anniversary Dinner & Gala held at The Biltmore Hotel. Additional awardees include:

**Yukiatsu Akizawa**, President and CEO, am/pm Japan Company, Ltd.

**C. Michael Armstrong**, Chairman and CEO, AT&T

**Walter F. Beran**, Co-Chairman Emeritus, Ernst & Young LLP

**Philip M. Condit**, Chairman and CEO, The Boeing Company

**Rod Dedeaux**, Co-Founder, U.S.-Japan College Baseball Championship Series

**Yoshikazu Hanawa**, Chairman and CEO, Nissan Motor Company, Ltd.

**Yoshi Inaba**, President and CEO, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.

**Renzo Ishii**, Co-Founder, U.S.-Japan College Baseball Championship Series

**Takashi Kiuchi**, Chairman and CEO, Mitsubishi America Corporation

**Kitaro**, Grammy and Golden Globe Award Winning Composer and Musician

**Tommy Lasorda**, Advisor to the Chairman, Los Angeles Dodgers

**Minoru Makihara**, Chairman, Mitsubishi International Corporation

**Etsuko and Joe D. Price**, Founders, Shin'enkan Foundation

**Richard Rosenberg**, Chairman and CEO, Bank of America

**Tasuku Takagaki**, Chairman, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi

**Dr. Shoichiro Toyoda**, Chairman, Toyota Motor Corporation

**Ambassador Taizo Watanabe**, Government of Japan

**Governor Pete Wilson**, State of California

The five airlines that bridge Southern California and Japan: **All Nippon Airways (ANA), American Airlines, Japan Airlines, Northwest Airlines and United Airlines.**

The four ports that serve as gateways across the Pacific: **Port of Hueneme, Port of Long Beach, Port of Los Angeles and Port of Kobe.**

### Regional Chapters Formed

With the increased attention on Japan, 1990 saw a flurry of activities, programs and membership growth within the Society. As demand increased for Japanese related programming across the large and diverse Southern Californian population, the Society's Board agreed to the formation of Regional Chapters



*97th Anniversary Dinner Table Setting.*



*Nancy Woo Hiromoto presents the International Citizens Award to Jerilyn Lopez Mendoza, Harbor Commissioner and Mike Christensen, Director, Port Development, the Port of Los Angeles.*



*99th Anniversary Emcee George Takei with International Citizens Awardees, Etsuko and Joe D. Price.*

that would produce local programming managed by local advisory councils. The first was the South Bay Regional Chapter, which included a region stretching along the southern shores of Santa Monica Bay south of L.A. International Airport, down to Long Beach and across to the Gateway Cities. The South Bay Chapter, chaired by Jeffrey Smith, held its first advisory council meeting on March 26, followed by a kickoff reception on May 17 in the spacious Atrium of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.'s headquarters in Torrance. Two months later, a San Diego Regional Chapter was organized and chaired by Ronald E. Pettis. In September, an Orange County Regional Chapter was organized and chaired by David Eagle. The Society's staff increased from two to seven employees, individual membership rose to nearly 4,000 and corporate membership numbered over 250.

## Japan Society of San Diego & Tijuana

In October 1996, under the guidance of Society chairman Russell L. Hanlin, and with the full support of the Society's Board, the San Diego Regional Chapter became an independent society and renamed itself the Japan Society of San Diego and Tijuana (JSSDT). JSSDT slowly grew and today it is one of the leaders among NAJAS member societies for outstanding programming, as well as a partner with the Society on several annual events.

## Family Events

By the early 1990s, the Society's strength with business and political programming was well established. However, it became apparent that the Society should also provide opportunities for Japanese and American families to share activities together. The first family event was the 1991 Family Fishing Trip that departed from Dana Point Harbor on a chartered fishing boat filled with Japanese and American parents and their children. The Fishing Trip remains so popular, that it is held every summer and is supported by Daiwa Corporation. In 1993, the inaugural Family Whale Watch Cruise was organized to enjoy the sight of California gray whales as they migrate from Alaska to Mexico every spring. Other events were organized, such as visits to the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve, which is flush in waves of orange poppy flowers at nearly the same time as Japan's cherry trees are in bloom.

Years later, in 2001, the Society created the Japan America Kite Festival® with a small grant from the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles. Orange County Regional Chapter chair, Werner Escher, originally suggested the idea of a Japan-themed kite festival and the idea was strongly endorsed by Society chairman Ron Hartwig. The Society joined forces with the Up Up & Away Kite Shop and Seal Beach Kite Club that already held an annual kite festival founded by the late Monty Weston. Today, the annual event is held next to the pier in Seal Beach, and it attracts over 6,000 visitors. It has also become the largest kiting event in Southern California and the largest Japan-related kite festival outside of Japan. According to





*Society members aboard the “City of Long Beach” for the popular annual Family Fishing Trip.*



*Giant kites decorate the Japan America Kite Festival®.*



*Japanese Kite Master Mikio Toki unveils his 150 meter train kite with alternating kites of U.S. and Japanese flags.*

members of the American Kitefliers Association, the world's largest group of kite enthusiasts, the Japan America Kite Festival® is also the “most family friendly kiting event worldwide.”

## Special Events

On April 20-21, 1993, the Society and the Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace presented a national policy conference, “Fragile Friendship: The Changing U.S. - Japan Relationship and the New Asia.” The conference featured keynote speakers former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon, and former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, and it made headline news across the United States.

In honor of Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan's visit to Los Angeles, the Society served as the lead organizer, along with Governor Pete Wilson, the Supervisors of Los Angeles County and Mayor Richard J. Riordan, for a dinner in the ballroom of the Regent Beverly Wilshire on June 20, 1994. The dinner committee was led by Society chairman emeritus Walter F. Beran and it included Ambassador James D. Hodgson, Consul General Seiichiro Noboru, JBA president Kazunori (Ken) Amano, Walt Disney Company Chairman & CEO Michael D. Eisner, ARCO Chairman Lodwick M. Cook, JCCSC President Hiroshi Kawabe, and several other prominent business and civic leaders. Approximately 700 people attended the special and very memorable event.



*Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan are introduced and enter the ballroom of the Regent Beverly Wilshire, June 20, 1994.*



*Then MITI Minister and future Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto speaks on "The New Japan & U.S.-Japan Cooperation at The Biltmore Hotel, September 9, 1994.*

On May 12, 1995, at the generous invitation of the Los Angeles Dodgers front office, three hundred Society members gathered to witness history as Hideo Nomo pitched his first game at Dodger Stadium; the Dodgers beat the Saint Louis Cardinals 8 to 4. Nomo was the first Japanese player to appear in Major League Baseball (MLB) since San Francisco's Masanori Murakami in 1965. Nomo also led the MLB with 236 strikeouts, started in the 1995 All-Star Game and was named MLB Rookie of the Year. Nomo's success helped open the floodgates for Japanese players and today almost every MLB team has Japanese players, much to the delight of their American fans, as well as Japanese fans both here and in Japan. Nomo's first game at Dodger Stadium is just one example of the rich and strong relationship the Society has enjoyed with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

In 1996, the Society hosted the U.S. premiere of Director Masayuki Suo's "Shall we Dance," an award-winning film, that like many other Japanese original films, was later remade by Hollywood with bigger movie stars but less compelling storylines.

### Japanese American National Museum

In 1999, the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) opened its new Pavilion to the public. JANM is the first museum in the U.S. dedicated to sharing the experience of Americans of Japanese ancestry as an integral part of U.S. history. Incorporated in 1985, it was originally located in Little Tokyo's historic Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple building. Today JANM's many activities include presenting historical and art exhibitions, working to develop linkages between Japanese communities worldwide, and hosting programs and events that fulfill its mission. Since the late 1980's the Society has enjoyed collaborating with JANM on a variety of programs.

The Society closed out the 1990's with a Welcome Dinner on April 29, 1999, in honor of Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. Society president, Dr. E. Barry Keehn helped craft an invitation that persuaded the prime minister to visit Los Angeles, specifically a chance for P.M. Obuchi to "relive" his post-college days with a visit to the Queen Mary, on which he sailed from Europe to New York in 1963. The welcome dinner marked the first public appearance by a sitting Japanese prime minister since the Society hosted Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi in 1957. Society chairman R. Thomas Decker presided over the event and had the honor of introducing the prime minister. Cooperating and supporting the dinner was the JBA, the JCCSC, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles World Affairs Council and Town Hall Los Angeles. The welcome dinner was held at The Regent Beverly Wilshire and was a sold-out event with 880 guests.



*After formal remarks, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi answered questions from the stage as Society Chairman R. Thomas Decker looks on. Regent Beverly Wilshire, April 29, 1999.*

### Kobe Relief Fund

Society members and thousands of additional Southern California residents opened their hearts to the hundreds of thousands of Japanese affected by the January 17, 1995, Great Hanshin Earthquake, which devastated Kobe and other towns in Hyogo Prefecture. It was Japan's worst earthquake since the Great Kanto earthquake in 1923. In the months following the quake, the Kobe Relief Fund (KRF) received approximately 10,000 individual contributions totaling \$1.7 million, the largest amount Kobe received from a grassroots relief campaign, said a message from Prime Minister Murayama and the Japanese Diet,

"Our people will forever acknowledge, appreciate and remember the importance of the friendship and solidarity which the nations of the world have so generously extended to us."

The KRF was created late in the evening of January 16th (California time). Learning of the earthquake from news

reports, Society staff member Steve Barth consulted with executive director Michael Mullen. Within hours, local radio and television carried announcements of the Kobe Relief Fund. The following day, the KRF was endorsed by the Society membership at the annual members meeting. The Society's vice chairman Kazunori (Ken) Amano, President of Nippondenso of Los Angeles, Inc., took a significant liaison role. Soon, the JBA and the JCCSC had become equal partners in the effort. The Rafu Shimpō newspaper, JACCC, JANM, Japanese Prefectural Association of Southern California, Little Tokyo Business Association, OCJAA and dozens of other Japanese and Japanese American organizations also played important roles.

## Society Trips to Japan

Eleven members shared an unforgettable experience on the first Society sponsored trip to Japan that took place February 20 to March 2, 1995. The trip included private meetings with key government and business leaders, including Ambassador Walter F. Mondale, members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, officials at the ministries of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Industry, and even a 5:01 Club with the America-Japan Society in Tokyo, as well as many executives formally based in Southern California. The group also enjoyed home visits in Tokyo and Kamakura and a visit to Nikko. The success of the trip was thanks to members of the board, Robert Brasch and Dr. Mary Barton, who served as tour leader and organizer, respectively, as well as Society members Paul Manai of JTB International and Keiko Rosensteel of All Nippon Airways (ANA).

A second Society trip was sponsored in 2007. At the invitation of the America-Japan Society in Tokyo, the Society delegation included thirty members who joined the America-Japan Society in Tokyo for its 90th Anniversary Banquet on



*Ambassador Yoshio Okawara, President of the America-Japan Society, introduces Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan at the Okura Hotel Tokyo, April 24, 2007.*

April 24 at the Hotel Okura Tokyo. The banquet provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet and dine with Their Majesties, The Emperor and Empress of Japan. The other top highlight of the trip was a visit to the Nagoya Prefectural Museum of Art for a private guided tour with Etsuko and Joe D. Price of their record-breaking exhibition, "The Price Collection JAKUCHU and the Age of Imagination." The trip concluded with a "Japan-America Friendship Reception" at the Hotel Okura Tokyo with Ambassador Yoshio Okawara, president of the America-Japan Society in Tokyo, and many friends and businesspeople formally based in Southern California.

## Educational Programming

The Society has always featured educational events as part of its programming, but towards the end of Japan's "lost decade" of the 1990's, there was a move toward a more grassroots educational programming, particularly for children. In 1997, with a generous start-up grant from the Japan Foundation, Center for Global Partnership and support from the Consulate General of Japan, the Society established the "Japan in a Suitcase" educational program. The purpose of the program is to teach diverse perspectives by disseminating accurate information about Japan to American elementary school students. The program teaches about the daily life of elementary school students in contemporary Japan. It is accomplished by teams of Japanese and American volunteers who are given an orientation and provided a curriculum along with materials designed not only to share interesting and relevant information about Japan, but also to compare and contrast the lifestyles of American and Japanese elementary school students.



In 2001, with generous support from Hitachi, Ltd., the Society initiated the "Hitachi Japanese Kite Workshops," which are held every fall in conjunction with the Japan America Kite Festival®. The workshops are "hands-on," in-classroom special events that provide students a positive introduction to Japan and Japanese culture through the building of a traditional Japanese kite. Led by Japanese kite masters

from Japan, elementary school students learn how to build and fly a Japanese bamboo and washi kite, a process that includes art, science, physics and a lot of fun. To date, nearly 4,000 underserved students have benefited from this program.



## Decade of Reinvigoration and Renewal

With the new millennium came a slow but steady improvement of the Japanese and American economies. The Society began to focus its efforts on reinvigorating its programs and activities. In 2002, long-time Society staff member Douglas G. Erber was promoted to president and soon collaborative efforts with other Japanese and Japanese American organizations were strengthened. A Society website ([www.jas-socal.org](http://www.jas-socal.org)) was created and in a few short years, the Society would move its offices from the third-level basement of downtown Los Angeles' Arco Plaza to a brighter and more spacious office in the business center annexed to the Los Angeles Marriott Downtown. A new Programs Committee was created and chaired by long-time member of the board, Robert L. Sharp. The Society's program calendar ballooned with variety and subject matter pertinent to the Society's diverse membership. Among the resulting program highlights were three outstanding and filled-to-capacity luncheon events featuring: His Excellency Koichi Haraguchi, Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations (and a past Consul General in Los Angeles); His Excellency Ryozi Kato, Japanese Ambassador to the U.S.A.; and The Honorable J. Thomas Schieffer, U.S. Ambassador to Japan.

## 150th Anniversary of United States-Japan Relations

The relationship between Japan and the U.S. formally began in 1853 with the arrival in Uraga of the "black ships" commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry, which was followed by the signing of the US-Japan Treaty of Peace and Amity in 1854. Accordingly, the years 2003 and 2004 marked the 150th anniversary of these events, and appropriate observances were planned to celebrate the milestone anniversary.

In 2003, with Robert V. Graziano serving as chairman, the Society inaugurated a goal to host its anniversary dinners in unique, fun and interesting venues. Thus, the 96th Anniversary Dinner & Gala took place on the playing field of Dodger Stadium. Subsequent venues included a repeat visit to Dodger Stadium; beneath the Wings of Air Force One, the U.S. Presidential Boeing 707 on display at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum; and, the World Cruise Center, Port of Los Angeles. In 2008, the 99th Anniversary Dinner honored long-time Society supporters and members of the board, Etsuko and Joe D. Price, whose life work of promoting the understanding and appreciation of Japanese Edo Period Art is unparalleled. The gala was held at the Pavilion for Japanese Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where 500 guests were among the first to enjoy a private viewing of the magnificent screens and paintings from, "The Age of Imagination: Japanese Art, 1615-1868, from the Price Collection," just days after the exhibition's opening.



*Tommy Lasorda speaks at the 96th Anniversary Dinner on the playing field of Dodger Stadium, May 11, 2005.*



*97th Anniversary Dinner, "Dining under the wings of Air Force One," July 15, 2006.*



On April 18, 2005, an important board retreat was led by Society chairman Donald P. Baker. Among the items addressed was the agreement that the board be downsized and that a new Board of Governors, a non-fiduciary advisory board, be created. In addition, a new mission statement was written, "The Japan America Society of Southern California was founded in 1909 to build economic, cultural, governmental and personal relationships between the people of Japan and America," and a new tag line was created, "Building Japan-America Relationships Since 1909." These have served as guiding forces in the ensuing years.

On May 30, 2007, the Society kicked off its annual United States-Japan Green Conference. The goal of the conference is to provide relationship-building opportunities for business-people seeking substantive business ventures in the fields of energy conservation, reduction of the use of natural resources, recycling and the elimination of hazardous pollutants. Generously supported by the Port of Los Angeles, the conference features distinguished panels of experts. Speakers have included consul generals of Japan, and leading executives and engineers from: FedEx; Mitsubishi Electric & Electronics USA; Office of the U.S. Trade Representative; Executive Office of the President; Panasonic Corporation; Port of Long Beach; Port of Los Angeles; Sanyo Energy (USA) Corporation; Sumitomo Electric Industries, Ltd.; and, USC Gould School of Law. The conference is an official event of World Trade Week and its cooperating organizations include the Consulate General of Japan, JETRO Los Angeles and the Torrance Chamber of Commerce. In 2009, the conference's Official Airline was American Airlines.

America-Japan Society and the Waseda Marketing Forum at Waseda University, Tokyo.

The Society benefited in 2008 by a substantial increase in individual and corporate memberships in the first half of the year. Yoshihiro Sano, chairman of the Centennial Celebration Committee, also secured an extremely generous donation from an anonymous source of \$250,000, which was allocated for additional professional staff in preparation of the Society's exciting 100th Anniversary. Through the end of his term in February 2009, Society chairman Edward A. Perron continued to spend considerable personal time to keep the Society moving forward on its centennial preparations. This included Edward Perron making three planning and fundraising trips to Japan, and assisting with the Endowment Campaign, spearheaded by banker and past Society chairman Mark Buchman, that will provide extra financial stability as the Society moves into its second century. The current chairman, Robert Brasch, is working closely with the Society's board and staff to ensure a successful presentation of the Society's Centennial Celebration events.

With the onset of one of the worst worldwide economic crises in history, centennial preparations were made more challenging, but the board, staff and the members of the Society doubled their efforts. Simply put, the Society has weathered two world wars, the Great Depression, trade wars, "Japan Bashing" and "Japan Passing" and it will encounter unknown future challenges during the next 100 years. The Japan America Society of Southern California will continue to thrive with the spirit of its sixteen founders' motto from 1909, "Mutual Friendship - Mutual Harmony" and it will continue to serve as the West Coast's leading organization for building economic, cultural, governmental and personal relationships between the people of Japan and America.□



*Panelists at the Third Annual U.S.-Japan Green Conference at the Holiday Inn Torrance, May 13, 2009.*

At the June 2007 NAJAS Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, the Society began discussions with leaders of other societies to offer reciprocal membership discounts on selected programs. The proposal was later adopted and has become an attractive benefit for all traveling Society members. The Society also worked out similar reciprocal membership discounts with The