

Campus News

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A part of Japan moves to our side of the globe

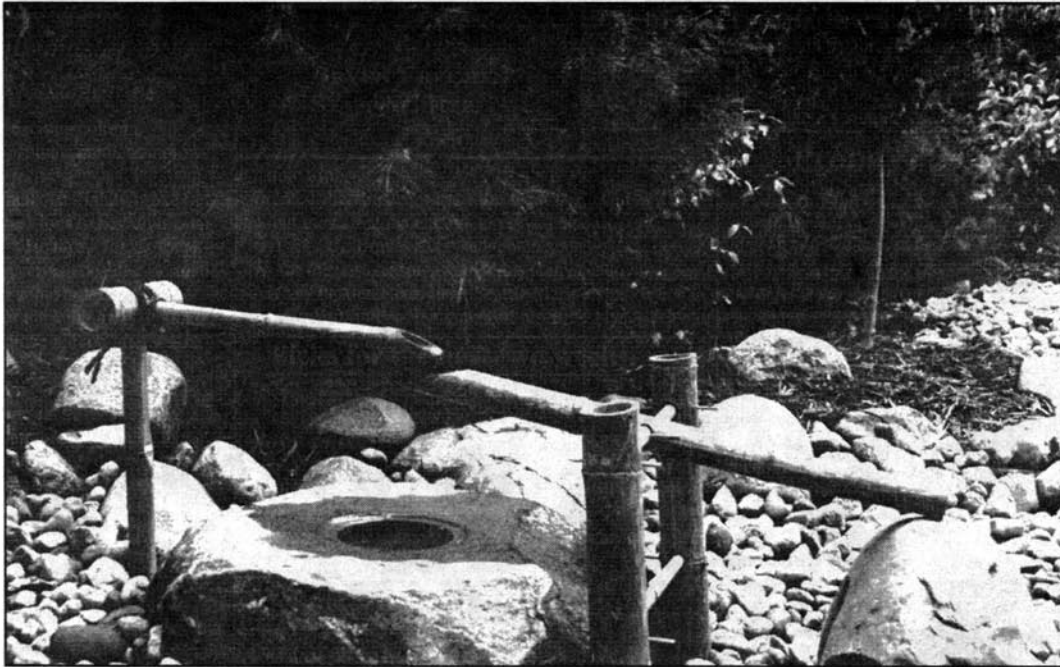


Photo by Katherine Ikuno

Tranquility - The use of certain flowers, natural woods, rocks, and water have been combined to represent the unity of the male and female with the harmony of nature. This well, in the garden of the Shakunage Cultural Foundation, murmurs gently and eases troubled minds. There are several different types of Japanese gardens, including Zen, rock, and moss gardens. Many of these gardens are near temples or shrines. Kyoto, the previous capital of Japan, is famous for its magnificent temples and its beautiful gardens. Japanese citizens, in their free time and on their days off, visit these gardens to relax. Schoolchildren also frequent these gardens on classroom field trips.

The majority of the Japanese are of the Shinto and Buddhist religions, which stress that all living things have a spirit which needs to be respected. Classes at the Shakunage Cultural Foundation teach people of this aspect and others of the Japanese culture. Examples of classes available at the Foundation include: Japanese Swordsmanship, Flower Arranging, Tea Ceremony, Calligraphy, Poetry Reading and Writing, Kimono Wearing, Music and Art Appreciation, and History. There are also special celebrations that take place periodically throughout the year. Artwork is on display in the pavilion, sometimes corresponding to certain classes or special times of the year.

By KATHERINE IKUNO
STAFF WRITER

Michael and Dianne Alexanian of East Lansing have built a corner of Japan in their backyard.

The idea for building and creating the pavilion and garden came from their trips



Photo by Katherine Ikuno
Fresh air - A tori gate in the traditional Japanese garden calms the soul.

to Shiga, Japan as Sister City Goodwill Exchange Delegates in 1993 and 1995.

Many Lansing Community College students have taken similar trips to Japan to study and work. These students make a nine- or three-month visit, learning the Japanese language and culture while being taught by LCC professors. Japanese students also attend LCC in the cultural exchange.

It is out of respect for the Goodwill Mission and all of the Michigan-Shiga Sister Cities involved that the Alexanians have named the Pavilion and Cultural Foundation after Shiga Prefecture's flower, the Rhododendron, or, in Japanese, Shakunage.

The mission of the Shakunage Cultural Founda-

tion is to promote awareness of the Japanese culture. They also intend to enhance Japanese/American business and friendships through a mutual understanding of their cultures.

The garden and pavilion are for the citizens of the Greater Lansing Area and to those from afar who are interested.

The Shakunage-Tei (cultural pavilion) not only is a place for cultural classes or meditation, but also for training: Japanese sword training called Tamiya Ryu Iaijutsu.

The Pavilion has the unique honor to have been dedicated as the first Tamiya Ryu Iaijutsu Dojo (training facility) in North America.

Another kind of Japanese sword training, Kendo, is practiced in America. Kendo trainees learn how to utilize

a sword by rehearsing with a practice sword made of bamboo called Shinai. The Shakunage Cultural Foundation, however, has not made this type of training available.

The Pavilion was dedicated in September by Mr. Kazuo Tsumaki of Yokohama, Japan. Tsumaki is not only the Japanese Advisor of the Shakunage Tei Tamiya Ryu Iaijutsu students, but also the representative for his father, Tsumaki Seirin Motonobu, who is a Grandmaster. Montonobu, who is 92 years old, is still teaching.

The Tsumaki family will soon be honored by celebrating 200 years of teaching and preserving this ancient cultural art.

Currently at the pavilion and garden, special cultural classes and seminars are be-

ing scheduled that highlight the ancient arts of Japan.

These include, but are not limited to;

Japanese Swordsmanship (Iaijutsu),

Flower Arranging (Ikebana)

Tea Ceremony (Sado)

Calligraphy (Shodo)

Poetry Reading and Writing

(Haiku)

Kimono-Wearing

Music and Art Appreciation

There will also be several other special events throughout the year that correspond to the Japanese calendar, like Boy's and Girl's Day (a special holiday held to honor young men and women), Old Souls Return Festival (a bone festival where homage is paid to the dead), and Moon Viewing parties.

In the pavilion itself, special artworks will be on a rotational display concurrent with certain classes at that time or

according to the time of year.

If you are interested in viewing the garden, signing up for a cultural class, or just want more information about future events or the Shakunage Cultural Foundation, call Michael or Dianne Alexanian at (517)332-3221.



Photo by Katherine Ikuno
Serenity - Sculptures in the Shakunage Cultural Foundation promote harmony