

Torii

*Marine Corps Air Station
Iwakuni, Japan*



Teller

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Shirohebi brings good fortune



Three snakes are kept in a heated double-glass enclosure at the White Snake Shrine so that visitors may view them year round.

It has been well established that people the world over have come to believe that certain things can bring them either good or bad luck. In Japan, especially in Iwakuni, it is believed that to view the shirohebi or white snake will bring the lucky promise of good fortune.

The white snake, considered sacred to the Japanese, inhabits the Imazu and Marifu areas of Iwakuni and is protected by local residents. These snakes make their homes in the ceilings and beneath the floors of houses.

According to Japanese folklore, it is said that the first habitat of the white snake was found in one of the rich rice storehouses of Lord Kikkawa. The gentle reptile got its color from eating rice.

Usually pearl-white in color, white snakes have eyes that are deep scarlet. The fully grown snakes are about six feet in length and about 1 kg in weight.

Because they are thought to bring luck and because they are night creatures which are seldom seen, Iwakuni City dedicated two viewing centers and four breeding centers. The White Snake Preservation Society operates a viewing center and a breeding center in the White Snake Shrine which is located on the north side of the Imazu River. When one of the snakes dies, it is buried in the shrine, which is flanked by statues of two other gods. People visiting the shrine may make offerings to the snakes' ancestors buried there or either of the gods

Sgt. Nolan Wells photo



After having made an offering and lit candles, a woman makes request of the snakes' ancestors which are buried in the shrine and prays to the gods which flank the shrine.

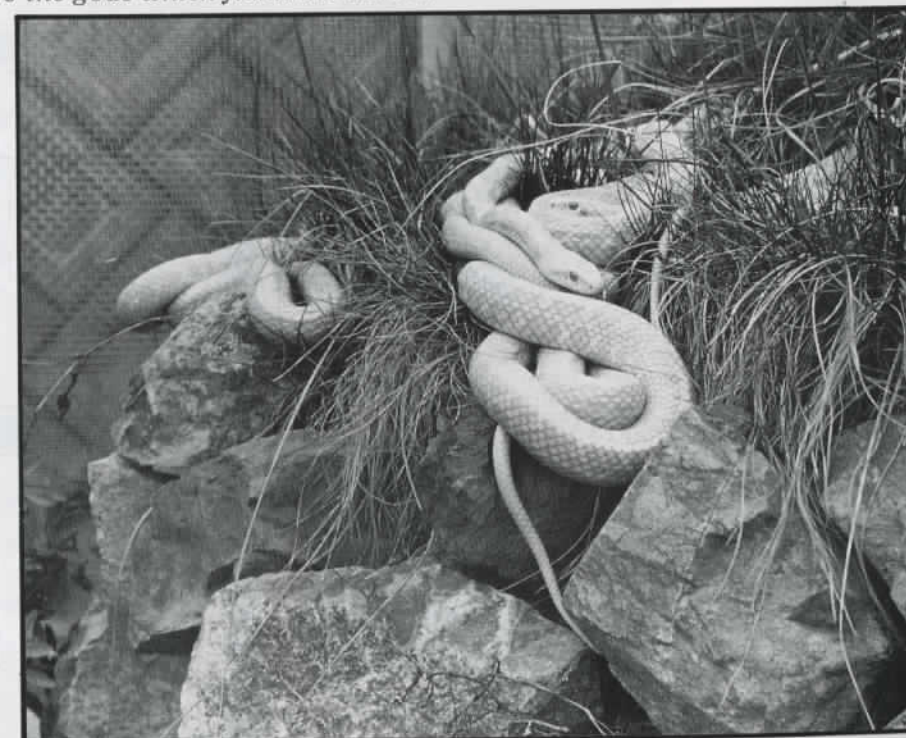
and ask for good fortune in their endeavors.

Iwakuni's second viewing center is located in the Kikko Park near the Kintai Bridge. There are currently more than 400 adult snakes and numerous young are being raised in the Iwakuni area.

Fed a diet of white mice weekly, some of the larger snakes are said to eat an average of 20 mice per month.

According to shrine officials, the snakes are never sold and it is strictly forbidden to kill one; Both acts are considered bad luck.

Those who would like to take a look at the Japanese answer to the rabbit's foot and the four-leaf clover, should pay a visit to the White Snake Shrine which is open year round from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., April through October; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. November through March. Along with learning local lore, visitors to the shrine can see one of nature's true wonders.



With the warmer weather, many of the 30 snakes housed in a mesh cage come from under the rocks to sun themselves during the day.

Our Cover

The roar of planes taking off and landing greeted contenders in the one-pitch softball tournament held Saturday and Sunday to kick off the opening of the 1988 Softball Season. (USMC photo by Sgt. Nolan Wells)

Torii Teller

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The entire student population of the Sunshine Fuji takes to the snow of Nakayama Pass for the much awaited snowball fight.

Perry students weary but wiser

by Dawn Starks

They arrived at the port fresh, clean, wide awake, and eager to experience all that laid before them. Twenty Matthew C. Perry fifth and sixth grade elementary students, two from the high school, two teachers, and two parents set out on the tour of a lifetime; an eight day trip around mainland Japan.

The Perry students, group numbers 41 and 42, boarded the Sunshine Fuji, an 8,000 ton, 130 meter long boat, which was launched in November 1983. The students left Tokuyama Port on a voyage that would last through the American student's spring vacation. The students traveled on this youth boat as guests of the Japanese students, who were their same ages.

Led by fifth grade teacher David Kelts, the students were setting out to learn, amongst other things, about themselves. Could they withstand eight days without television, snacks, radio, parents or anything that would come to mind when they thought of the comforts of home? But, in turn, if each child could withstand the pressures, each would reap the benefits of having seen more of mainland Japan than many of their peers who reside on Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni.

They left, expecting the trip to be tough, for they would be the only Americans on the boat. The 26 were constantly in demand and their every move was held by watchful eyes.

Colorful streamers fell from the boat as it prepared to begin the journey. The passengers, standing on the top deck of the boat, waved a final good-bye to their families. Teary-eyed mothers watched

the boat pulled away. They remained dockside until the Sunshine Fuji could no longer be seen.

After their first meal in the boat's huge dining room, Perry students set out exploring their new surroundings and meeting their fellow passengers. They immediately knew of their accommodations for the trip; an empty room, where their personal belongings would be placed and at night, blankets and pillows would be tossed on the floor, to be put away in the morning. That spot where they slept would be used as their play area for the day.

The first stop for the boat was Kobe. The 1,000 students left the boat in the early morning and enjoyed Kobe Tower. Some rode elevators to the top while others walked up the numerous, winding staircases. The magnificent view of Kobe that could be seen from atop provide to be a just reward for their efforts.

The passengers returned to the boat and spent the afternoon practicing the use of life jackets and learning of other safety measures.

On the third day of the trip, the boat docked in Tokyo. The students boarded 18 larger tour buses and began a tour of the city. They donned their rain coats and umbrellas to guard against the rain that fell on Tokyo the entire day. The students visited Ueno Zoo and enjoyed the pandas and the newest member of that family--Tong Tong; the Japanese parliament building which is otherwise referred to as the Diet; NHK - the Japan Broadcasting Corporation and Tokyo Tower. It was at the latter that the passengers were first allowed to purchase souvenirs.



Still clad in their bright orange jackets, students enjoy one of their meals aboard the Sunshine Fuji.

The Perry students spent the fourth day of the trip on the boat as it headed up the coast to Hokkaido. They taught their new friends new games such as the Hokey Pokey and Bingo. In return these new acquaintances taught them the art of origami.

Snow greeted the boat when it docked in Hokkaido. The passengers again boarded tour buses for the visit. The first stop was Hokkaido University, then to a nearby restaurant, for a Genghis Khan barbecue.

After eating, the moment for which the students had been so eagerly awaiting arrived - the stop at Nakayama Pass for a snowball fight.

After drying themselves off, the students again boarded the buses for a tour of Lake Toya - which is the home of volcanoes, and a stop at Showa Shinzan - the "growing" mountain.

The Sunshine Fuji then began its journey back down the coast and arrived at Ryoza Port, Sado Island. The passengers walked to the island auditorium to meet the Sado dancers, drummers and the children of Sado.

Students of Sado ate dinner on the boat and enjoyed games and other various activities. The boat stayed in port overnight and left the next morning with still more streamers and waves of good-bye.

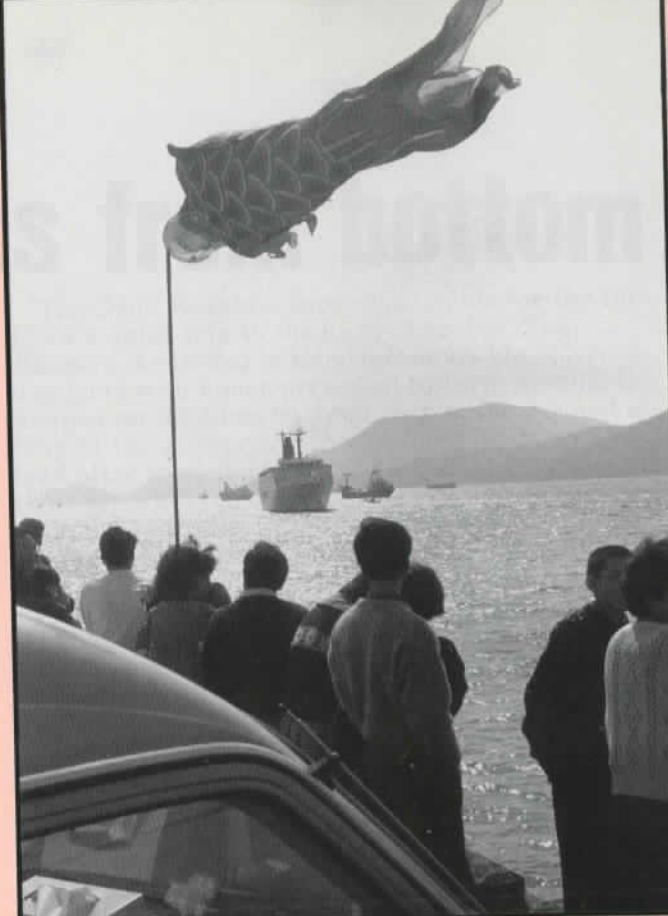
The seventh day of the boat tour was again spent at sea. Each group participated in a coloring contest, with the theme "What I enjoyed most about the boat trip." The groups drew, designed and colored the posters themselves.

That evening held the final boat festival when each of the groups performed a skit that they had again organized and practiced themselves. The Perry students performed "Make New Friends" and "We are the World."

The final day of the trip held mixed emotions--joy at seeing badly missed families and sadness at having to say good-bye to new friends.

The boat passed under the bridge connecting Kyusyu and Honsyu, which symbolized the finish line.

The farewell ceremonies held in the last hours on the boat, were filled with tears, as the students said good-bye. Their teary eyes cleared as Tokuyama Port, family, and home came into view.



Parents eagerly await the return of the boat which carried their children around Japan during an eight day trek.



Matthew C. Perry students bid farewell to dockside parents amidst hundreds of multi-colored streamers.

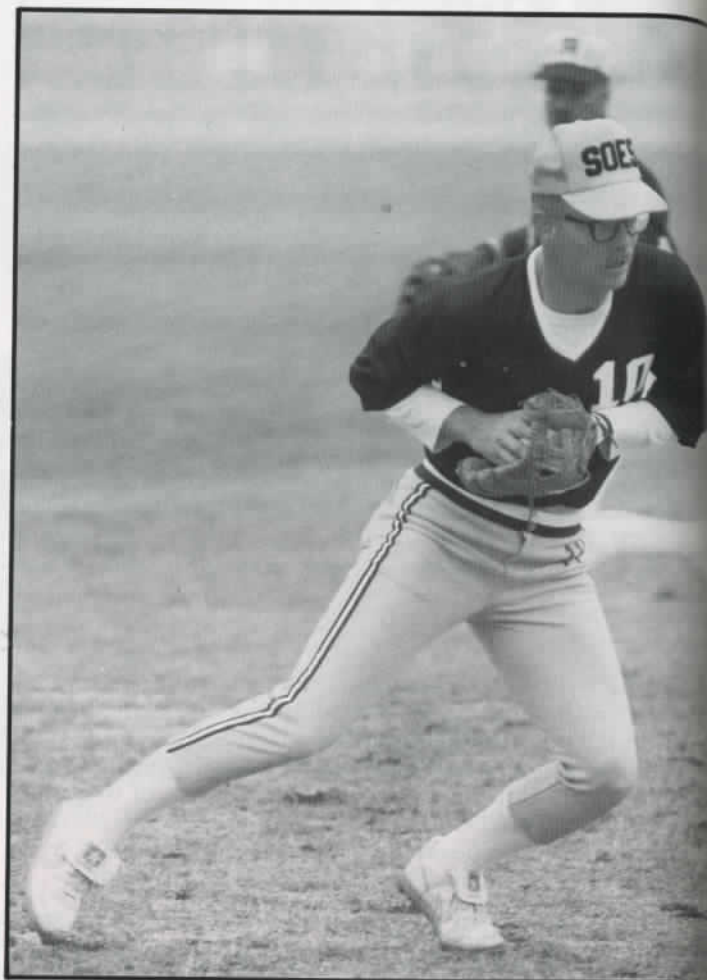
The boat made its final stop - docking at Tokuyama Port. Again, they were greeted with welcome home signs. As the travelers looked out at those greeting them, somehow they expected them to be different. Different, because the students, themselves were different.

Individually they had learned more about themselves. Together they had withstood homesickness, sea sickness, the language barriers, and the rigors of the eight day voyage.

After the boat docked, the parents took their weary travelers home. So ended the trip, but such an experience can never be forgotten. When the students catch up on sleep and eat all the pizza and ice cream they can eat they will seriously begin to feel how fortunate they were to have been able to be part of such an experience.



Mark Ross moves into shallow right field to make a catch for his PMO squad (above). Lite Crew's Robert Harper goes for a shot down the right-field line (right).



Grim Reapers' left fielder Pat Holm scoops up a hit to hold the runner at first during the game in which MWHS-1 doormatted PMO 11-1.



Lite Crew battles from bottom

by MSgt. Marv Price

It was a weekend of contrast on the Slipway soft-ball diamond for the season opening one pitch tourney featuring 12 teams; rain and sunshine, squeakers and slaughters, short games and long, upsets and perennial winners, but when the final out was recorded one of the favorites walked away with all the marbles.

The Lite Crew, comprised of several station Marines with intramural and varsity experience, one soldier, one airman, a recent M.C. Perry grad and a hard hitting middle-aged looking civilian technician, sandwiched a loss between wins on Saturday and had to fight the long uphill battle through the losers bracket to the tourney finals.

Despite the odds against them, the Lite Crew made the climb and bested H&MS-15 twice on Sunday afternoon to capture the crown.

H&MS-15 had advanced through the winners bracket with a close 13-12 win over H&HS Chaplain in its first game. The Hamsters had another close call in their second clash, finally prevailing over Det. A 3-2 in 10 innings. On Sunday '15 knocked off the surprise team of the tournament, the H&HS Admin Ninjas, 11-1. The Ninjas had a great Saturday, winning three contests, including a 9-6 victory over annual contenders, the MWHS-1 Grim Reapers. As good as Saturday and its rain were to the Ninjas, Sunday and its sunshine were bad. The Admin squad dropped its only two games to finish third in the weekend tournament.

The Grim Reapers were responsible for the Lite Crew's quick trip to the losers bracket. The Reapers, bedecked in their infamous black jerseys complete with bones arranged to form numbers, jumped on the Lites early in both teams second affair of the afternoon. The Reapers grabbed a 6-0 lead after two, stretched it to 8-0 after four and held tight for a 8-5 triumph.

Banished to the unfamiliar confines of the losers bracket, the Lites dispatched the PMO squad, which had earlier erased H&MS-15 Avionics 17-0, by the final of 7-2. The Sunday sun warmed the determination and the bats of the Lites as they found new resolve. They knew when the day began they had to win five games, including four in a row, to claim the title, and they set about doing just that.

The first Sunday hurdle was H&MS-12 Ordnance. The Lites brushed '12 aside 9-1 and then took their only break of the day to watch the winners bracket game between H&MS-15 and the Ninjas. Det. A provided the next opposition for the Lites and after six innings it was all over, 11-1. That set up the battle between Cinderella and the favorites--the Ninjas against the Lites.

The Lites first three batters in the first inning scored for their only runs of the contest. The Ninjas were held scoreless by the stubborn Lite defense until the bottom of the seventh when they pushed a solo score across to make the final 3-1.

Thus it was on to the finals between the Lites and Hamsters of H&MS-15. '15 had only to win once for the title, the Lites needed a first game victory to force a final winner-take-all, title confrontation.

The Lites drew first blood in their half of the first, plating two runs. '15 cut the lead in half in the second with one score and added another in the third to knot the game. The Lites went in front for good in the fourth with three runs and added an insurance tally in the sixth to make the final 6-2.

In the last contest of the weekend the Lites again broke on top with three in the third. Both teams managed a single run in the fifth and '15 added a second run in the sixth. Down 4 to 2 in the top of the seventh, the Hamsters found themselves on the ropes and in need of two runs to tie. They got them and went into the bottom of the seventh tied at 4.

A sacrifice fly off the bat of Dana Shorter drove home the winning run to give the Lites the much deserved tourney title.

In other tourney action of note, the M.C. Perry boys lost a one inning game to H&MS-12 Ordnance when the umpires stopped the contest because the boys failed to enter their line-up in the official scorer's book. The Ordnance group also was involved in another controversy in its next game. Disbursing players rejoiced after seven innings, thinking they had won 9-8, but a check of the official score book revealed the score was 8-8. Ordnance used the new life to plate 10 runs in the eighth. Disbursing battled back to score two in the bottom of the stanza but it was too little, too late, and their joy quickly faded as they were dropped from the competition.



Sgt. Nelson Wells photo