

【Visit to Portland in the U.S.】

Hello. This is the Mayor of Okayama City, Omori.

I had visited Portland city in Oregon State, U.S. with members of Okayama Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Okayama University from April 5 to 10. The main purpose of this visit was to investigate the town planning of Portland City where it is called “Most livable city across America. I heard the stories from the Mayor of Portland City and officials of City Bureau of Development Works and the State University and explored the city enough.

Three impressive things for me about Portland are below.

1. Livable and exciting town

I got an impression that Portland city seems to be easy to live for even for elderlies because the public transportation is enhanced, such as tram running even in a small alley, while it is only running in Central Avenue in Okayama. In addition, exhibitions such as contemporary art and events are abundant in the town. I heard a variety of local beer was sold there. I totally enjoyed walking around.

2. Environmental Protection

In Portland, the entire town is vigilant to environment such as promoting a conversion from car to public transportation to reduce emissions, attract companies that have small impact on the

environment, or pooling rainwater in the entire district to reuse it at places like toilets.

I was amazed by their thoroughly consciousness and meticulous care to environmental protection; in particular, trash of hotel room was compartmentalized well and souvenirs were packaged in a paper bag rather than plastic bag.

3. Citizen Participation

The explanation by words only was not enough to understand completely at times, however, citizen participation was a large keyword everywhere. Organizing opinions of citizens must be a hard work, but everyone who explained was very proud of themselves for participating and achieving. I think we should learn this point from them.

During my stay, I was invited by the local resident Mr. Junki Yoshida, the chairman of Yoshida Sauce to visit the sauce factory and heard his hapless half his life and then had a dinner with him at his 82,000.00 square meters mansion.

Mr. Yoshida succeeded the “Yoshida Sauce” in the US and embodied the American dream. He is famous for his unprecedented act that has been introduced many times in Japanese television and his correspond seems to be unconventional but he pays meticulous attention. I was able to have so much fun and spend meaningful moments.

Currently he lives with his wife (Linda) alone at their mansion in the middle of nature. In addition to admire Linda's frontier spirits, I thought my wife couldn't live like them aside from me.

I asked him to come to Okayama and give a speech by the way. When it comes true, why don't you come and touch his intense passion?

In the end, let me share with you the words of Mr. Okazaki the president of Okayama Chamber of Commerce and Industry which left a strong impression on me in this visit.

"I wouldn't want to live in New York, but I don't mind living in Portland."

We'd like to promote more efforts in order to make Okayama City the livable town in Japan and get as many people as say "I wouldn't want to live in Tokyo, but I don't mind living in Okayama" .