

# Japan America Society of Minnesota



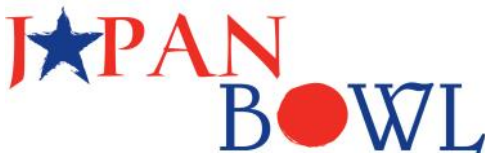
## 通 信

*The Tsūshin is a membership publication of the Japan America Society of Minnesota*

April 2020 Vol. 29, No. 4

### National Japan Bowl 2020 postponed

The National Japan Bowl 2020 was supposed to be held April 2-3. Due to current health concerns caused by COVID-19, the organizers have decided to postpone the event and create a digital format instead of an in-person competition in Washington D.C. The time and date are to be determined.



Japan Bowl is the nationwide championship for high school students who are studying Japanese language and culture. Participants listen to questions and test their knowledge about Japan in a variety of fields beyond language: society, daily life, history, geography, and current events. It is a wonderful opportunity for participants. They can increase their individual research skills and their ability to cooperate as a group throughout the preparation. They also build on a foundation for a future related to Japan.

We will make our best efforts to ensure Japan Bowl 2020 is an unforgettable time for the Minnesota participants! These young people have the potential to become a bridge between Japan and the US, just as in typical years.

### Thank You, Nihonjinkai, for the great Lunch!



*Members of Nihonjin Kai*

On March 9th, JASM visited the Japanese Library in Minneapolis to join Nihonjinkai. Thanks to less snow than in a typical winter, the library was filled with visitors, sharing Japanese food to enjoy together. There was also the monthly birthday celebration for members born in March, with a beautiful cake made by Ms. Mami Russell. She has been making a hit with the Japanese community in Minnesota with her monthly cake for Nihonjinkai, as well as with the food booth she organizes at JASM's *obon* festival every year.

Nihonjinkai has community members from several generations. Members have walked many varied paths to their lives here in Minnesota. It's always a delight when their stories are shared between generations. Nihonjinkai is not only as a place where people who are related to Japan can find fellowship, but also a place where individuals can share how they are a part of the long history of Japan and the US, including the history we are making today.

### Announcement of Takuzo Ishida Memorial Scholarship



*Ms. Zoe Hugart*

It is our great pleasure to offer a scholarship to a high school student in Minnesota in honor of Mr. Takuzo Ishida. Thanks to the benevolent consideration of Mr. Ishida's family, we are able to award a recipient for travel to or within Japan before, during, or after the student's specified term of study for a month or more. In February, the first recipient was selected, and the scholarship was awarded to Zoe Hugart. Our heartfelt congratulations!

The Takuzo Ishida Memorial Scholarship Selection Committee was impressed by Zoe's long-term commitment to study Japanese culture and language. She started teaching herself hiragana in 6th grade, did very well in Japanese classes in middle school and high school, and aspires to continue through college. The selection committee was excited by her future plans to be a legal translator and continue to develop and apply her Japanese skills professionally. Her active engagement as a leader in multiple Japanese clubs were also promising indications of her capabilities. We are confident and proud to have her represent the future of the Japan-Minnesota relationship.

Zoe has this response to the award announcement:

"I am incredibly honored to be the first winner of the Takuzo Ishida Memorial Scholarship. I've studied Japanese and have wanted to go abroad for six years. I try to share my interest and love for Japanese culture and language with anyone and everyone, so being able to go to Japan to learn as much as I can as well as share my own culture with my host family and school will truly be a dream come true. I am thrilled that this scholarship will help me do that and bring both Japan and Minnesota closer together during my year abroad."

Due to the coronavirus pandemic situation her exchange program is postponed. It will now begin in August 2020 and run through June 2021. We are looking forward to her endeavors in Japan and hearing about her efforts and experiences.

About Mr. Takuzo Ishida:

*... continues on page 2*



*Mr. Takuzo Ishida*

## Letter from the JASM President



*Elizabeth Fehrmann  
JASM President*

Dear JASM members, family, and friends:

Saying that these are “unprecedented times” might sound like hyperbole, but I can’t think of another phrase that so aptly summarizes the current global situation and sentiment as that one does. While we go through this period of uncertainty and disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope everyone is able to find some manner of peace and comfort within our new “normal,” at least for the time being.

Regardless of current conditions, we had a great start to the year, with successful Shinnenkai and J-Quiz events. For the first time in several years, luck was with us and we did not have a snowstorm coincide with the Shinnenkai festival, which was a nice change! However, as you all know, we were forced to postpone our March Corporate Roundtable with the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) due to the novel coronavirus outbreak. I know a lot of people were looking forward to learning more about MAC, myself included, so we will be working with our partners at the airport to get that event back on the calendar as soon as possible.

In the meantime, even though we are adhering to the medically-advised physical distancing measures, we are still finding ways to forge ahead with our plans to make JASM an even better organization. I firmly believe that an organization like ours requires a strong foundation upon which to build and grow as the environment and member needs change. So, to that end, I’m happy to announce that at our board meeting on February 18, we officially kicked off our first strategic planning process since 2007. We will be going through several steps over the next five months or so, and hope to formally launch our 2021-24 strategic plan in September.

Dr. Mirja Hanson, Senior Consultant with Millennia Consulting, has agreed to facilitate our strategic planning process. Mirja is an accomplished facilitator, with over 44 years of experience and education in organizational and leadership development. You can read more about her career [here](https://www.consultmillennia.com/consultants/mirja-hanson-edd-mba) (<https://www.consultmillennia.com/consultants/mirja-hanson-edd-mba>). She is also an enthusiastic supporter of the Japanese community and a dedicated member of JASM; she is a founding member and past president of our organization, and has served as the Honorary Consul General of Japan at Minneapolis. I can think of no better person to help guide us through this process than Mirja.

Once again, I’d like to extend a word of thanks to everyone who participated in our constituent survey last year; your feedback is a critical tool in this process to help us focus and prioritize our work so that we can make JASM work better for you.

Please note: if you did not get a chance to participate in the survey, or if you have additional thoughts you’d like to share, Mirja has graciously given us permission to contact her directly via e-mail ([hanson@consultmillennia.com](mailto:hanson@consultmillennia.com)) through May 15 while we go through the stakeholder feedback collection phase of the process.

Finally, as the reality of this pandemic situation sets in and unfolds, I would just encourage you to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization’s guidelines for how to keep yourself and your loved ones as safe as possible. We need a community effort to get this pandemic under control, and I know our JASM community is up to the task.

Take care,  
*Elizabeth Fehrmann*

### Announcement of Takuzo Ishida Memorial Scholarship, continued

Mr. Takuzo Ishida (1944-2019) was born in Hirado, Japan. He moved to St. Paul in 1981 and became a research chemist at 3M Imaging Technology Laboratory, gaining more than 20 patents in the field of dry process imaging technology.

His work was honored with a Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1997. His contributions reached far beyond his field of research. He served as the president and emeritus director of Japan America Society of Minnesota, as a board member of the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, and as the vice president of the Bach Society of Minnesota. He also founded the Minneapolis Japanese School to promote awareness of and education about Japan and friendly Japan-U.S. relations. He received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, conferred by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in 2017.



### Membership News

Thanks to the following renewing JASM members:  
Peter Hill

Thanks to the following renewing Corporate members:  
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Surdyk’s Liquor

JETAA MN

## Support Our Corporate Member: Surdyk's Liquor & Cheese

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Toji Hiroko Yokozawa-san

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## Support Our Corporate Member: JK's Table

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We offer curbside pickup or delivery using Postmates

Gift cards are also available online

Please check us out on [Facebook](#)/[Instagram](#)/[Twitter](#)!

Thank you for your continued support during this difficult time!! Stay well!

JK's Table 952-831-0194 [jkstable@hotmail.com](mailto:jkstable@hotmail.com)





## Letter from a Mondale Scholarship Recipient



*Alison and Mi Chee carry lanterns for the Nezu Shrine Festival*

September 20th-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, was the weekend of the Nezu Shinto shrine festival. On the first day, all the international students got to pull a giant float with a taiko drum on it through the town. The next day we carried a giant 2000 lb. shrine (mikoshi みこし) for two hours.

For the first of those two hours, I was lucky enough to be chosen to carry one of two lanterns used to guide the people carrying the shrine.

Carrying the lanterns is a job only women are allowed to do. I asked our leader, Tanaka

-san, about this and he said it may have been the job of shrine maidens in the past. I saw one set of lanterns carried by men, but that was because the only people carrying that shrine were males; that shrine was preceded by one carried only by women. Go girl power! For the second hour I shouldered the shrine like a (wo)man and carried it till the end. My shoulders may have hurt for a few days, but the experience will last me the rest of my life. We also got some great souvenirs (omiyage おみやげ).



*Carrying the mikoshi for the Nezu Shrine Festival*

After we were done carrying the mikoshi, we walked around the festival where I used some of my generous scholarship money to buy some traditional Japanese treats like octopus balls (takoyaki たこ焼き) and shaved ice with sweetened condensed milk (kakigori かき氷). Being a part of the Nezu shrine festival was one of the best things we did in Japan, and I'm so glad to have experienced it!

Alison Meierhofer



*Group Picture at the Nezu Shrine Festival*

## Save the date for the 2020 Mondale Gala



*Mondale Award and Scholarship Gala 2019*

Every year, the **Mondale Award** is given to the organization or individuals who have made a commendable accomplishment to promote mutual understanding between people in Japan and Minnesota. Also, the **Mondale Scholarship** will support college students in

Minnesota who are selected due to their promising abilities and passion to contribute to future relations between Japan and Minnesota, through support of their study-abroad programs in Japan.

The Mondale Gala this year has been scheduled for November 14th. The gala will include a celebration dinner along with presentation of the award and scholarship. More information is forthcoming; mark your calendar! Please stay tuned and come to celebrate the prize winners and support the scholarship fund.

**Saturday, November 14, 2020**  
5:30 pm - 9:00 pm

**Oak Ridge Country Club in Hopkins** 700 Oak Ridge Rd,  
Hopkins, MN 55305



*Mondale Gala 2019*

## Japanese Spring Sweets



*Sakura-mochi*

Japanese confectionery is a cherished traditional art. Japanese people have invented various kinds of sweets to note the coming of spring with beautiful spring designs. Here are two favorite Japanese spring sweets people treat themselves with, especially

when they view cherry blossoms.

Sakura-mochi (cherry blossom-flavored rice cake) has two varieties. In eastern Japan, the dough of sakura-mochi is made with wheat flour, while made of sticky rice in western Japan. Both kinds of sakura-mochi have red bean paste inside the dough and are usually wrapped by a cherry leaf. In western Japan, people sample salt-preserved cherry leaves as well, to enjoy cherry blossoms visually and through taste.

Kusa-mochi (Mugwort-flavored green rice cake) has a unique fragrance of fresh leaves, which impart a forest feeling. Mugwort is a common plant whose leaves are usually picked in spring. Mugwort leaves are mixed in the dough and give the rice cakes a green hue. Kusa-mochi has also red bean paste inside, producing a delightful combination of sweetness and bitterness.



*Kusa-mochi*

## Beyond the Classroom

By Sanae Tomita, Japanese Teacher at Shakopee High School

*JASM, as the hub of the Japanese community in Minnesota, encourages American high school students learn about what it's like to be a global citizen.*

As a group project for Japanese classes at Shakopee High School, students had the opportunity to interact with people in the community to learn about their international work experiences. The interviewees kindly offered their time to contribute to this project. Students were assigned to interview someone whose job correlates to their academic interest. For example, the Business & Entrepreneurship Academy students interviewed Mr. Kumamoto at JK's Table to learn about running a Japanese restaurant/catering business in Minnesota.

After researching the interviewee's company on the internet, students in small groups came up with a list of interview questions and recorded themselves asking the questions in Japanese. Once they received the interviewee's response video, each group reported through an essay written in Japanese what they learned and their thoughts about the subject's profession.



Ms. Midori Drake



Mr. Michael Nilan

Thanks to the interviewees, this project provided our students with an authentic learning experience to communicate with people outside the classroom in Japanese. Students were very excited not only about the process of interacting with someone using technology but also the challenges of interpreting the messages from real people who work in the area of their interest. One student commented: "This project was a cool way to see how our Japanese skills have developed." The project also helped them visualize becoming a lifelong learner of Japanese. As another student said: "It was important to learn how Japanese can be used in jobs and that there are other people out there who have also learned Japanese."

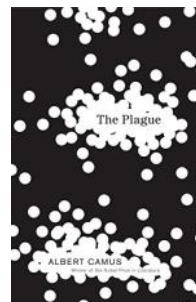
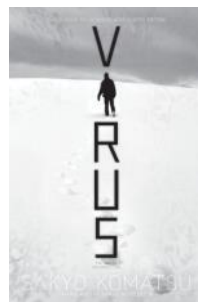
The Shakopee High School Japanese program would like to thank the following people for their wholehearted support of this project. Since it was such a great success, we'd like to keep offering this opportunity to our students. We are hoping this list will keep growing with many other members of JASM.



Students working in groups

Ms. Midori Drake (Daikin Applied)  
Mr. Hiroshi Kumamoto (JK's Table)  
Ms. Asako Hirabayashi (composer and harpsichordist)  
Mr. Hiroshi Nakato (University of Minnesota)  
Mr. Michael Nilan (medical device industry)  
Mr. Hiroki Nakagawa (Sou Fujimoto Architects)  
Ms. Lena Kelly (Japan Foundation LA)  
Ms. Kumi Greenhalgh (HomeTown Bank)  
Mr. Paul Spekman (Fremont)  
Mr. Yutaka Kayamori (Fremont)  
CODY (Entertainer/English teacher)  
Mr. Peter Weeks (former JET)

## Tom Haeg's Book Review



*Virus: Day of Resurrection (Fukkatsu no hi)*; Sakyo Komatsu, 1964, English translation 2012; and *The Plague* (original title: *La Peste*), Albert Camus, 1947, English translation 1948.

COVID-19, or coronavirus, is extremely dangerous, with a horrific pedigree. We have seen this movie before. Witness the Black Plague, Ebola, SARS, the Spanish Flu, and other pandemics suffered all over the world over centuries, causing millions of deaths. Over and over again. There is a surfeit of global literature explaining these sinister phenomena. Here are two books written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one in the East and one in the West, which provide more context for this time of crisis.

*Virus* is a Japanese science fiction novel written during the Cold War with apocalyptic themes of supergerms combined with threatened nuclear warfare. Microbes from outer space gathered by U.S. astronauts are delivered to good-intentioned bio-warfare researchers. The microbes are stolen, the vial containing the germs is broken, and the contents dispersed into the atmosphere. The microbes are fatal and without an apparent cure. The resulting pandemic kills the entire human race, except for staff in Antarctic research stations -- 10,000 men and 16 women. The Orwellian plot thickens when they decide how to procreate to save the species (see: *Doctor Strangelove*). Meanwhile, an experimental vaccine is offered to our protagonist, Yoshizumi-san, an earthquake scientist, who skirts nuclear armageddon only to reunite with survivors in South America -- proving that the trial vaccine he took is effective. And they all live happily ever after.

*The Plague* is an historical-period novel with existential attributes typical of Camus. Killer microbes are found in rat-infested cholera in 1940s French-occupied Oran, Algeria. There were actually several choleric epidemics there in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and twentieth centuries. Our hero, Dr. Bernard Rieux, while treating his infected patients, discovers the bacterial disease and immediately warns the authorities to take preventive action against an epidemic. They don't (sound familiar, eh, Dr. Li Wenliang?). Rieux then introduces various characters from disparate backgrounds: community organizer, journalist, city clerk, etc., to lighten the storyline by showcasing various attitudes on the meaning of life and death amid the squalor. The epidemic eventually runs its course sans vaccination and the town supposedly returns to normal. And they all (well, some) live happily ever after, too.

Neither book has a happy ending: more damage control than bliss. They are not romance fairy tales. They are real reminders of our fragile human condition. Their common themes of fear, isolation, and despair resonate with us today. But they also speak of the presence of courage, hope, and perseverance to conquer this unknown and shadowy enemy. Oh, by the way, for those keeping score at home, in the Chinese calendar 2020 is the year of rat.

-Tom Haeg



## A Word from Nihonjinkai

Dear Minnesota Japanese Friends, and all of you who love to read Japanese books,

*We are taking the current COVID-19 situation seriously. It's important to keep you safe and healthy. It's not my first choice, but the Minnesota Japanese Library will be closed for awhile. We cannot say until when for sure, but the Minnesota Japanese Library will open again when Minnesota schools re-open. Thank you for your understanding and patience. Stay safe and healthy.*

ミネソタ日本語図書館に来られている方へ

残念ですがコロナウィルスの感染が拡大しています。皆さんの健康が第一ですので、残念ですがミネソタ日本語図書館を一時閉館することになりました。ミネソタ州の学校が開校されるようになりまして再開する予定です。それまでご不便をお掛けしますがよろしくご理解のほどお願いします。

Yoko Breckenridge

These are very strange and difficult times for all of us! We know it was hard for Yoko Breckenridge to close the Japanese Library, but we ask you to respect the decision and stay away until things get back on schedule. Until then, please find other ways to connect with family and friends! A phone call, a card or letter in the mail — whatever it takes. Make sure to check with elderly Japanese in our community to make sure they have what they need while isolated. They may need assistance with setting up deliveries or other services that they have never used before. Offer your help and talents however you can.

Please be mindful of those who cannot see even their own family because they are in senior facilities with strict restrictions in place. Our own Nihonjinkai members will not be able to meet in April, but we will keep you posted! Stay healthy & safe!

Don't forget to join our Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1644814705588014/>



Photo by  
Ackerman + Gruber

**Yoko Breckenridge**  
**612-839-0008**



## The Japan Meteorological Agency's Index Tree at Yasukuni Shrine

*(First Published in Reader Mail in The Japan Times, April 7, 2017. Copyright Robert J Luck, 2017)*



*The JMA's Index Tree at Yasukuni Shrine*

The Japan Meteorological Agency's responsibilities include the forecasting and tracking of typhoons, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, snowstorms, volcanic eruptions and... cherry blossoms. To help the JMA track the "blossom front" as it crosses the country, each prefecture has a designated "index tree" to report *Kaika* (first blossoms) and *Mankai* (full bloom). Metropolitan Tokyo's index tree is in Yasukuni Shrine, which was founded during the Meiji Restoration to commemorate Japan's war dead. Yasukuni is only a few blocks away from the JMA offices, making it a convenient location for JMA staff to follow the progression from bud to blossom. Yasukuni also happens to be a source of tension between Japan and Asian countries, especially China and Korea, since the 1970s, when it enshrined soldiers convicted of war crimes in World War II. The designation of the index tree at Yasukuni appears to be a coincidence, rather than a nationalist conspiracy, as it occurred in 1966, before the war criminal controversy began.

My father-in-law spent World War II on the Amur River in Northern Manchuria peering through binoculars at Soviet soldiers peering back at him. He was a pacifist and a lousy shot, so this suited him fine. Nine summers ago, he was hospitalized with bile duct cancer just before the *Tanabata* festival. The nurses brought in a small bamboo plant and his fellow patients wrote wishes on strips of paper and hung them from the leaves. He wrote "Protect Article 9," the section of the Japanese Constitution renouncing war as a sovereign right.

When he died, my mother-in-law donated a cherry tree in his memory to Toneri Park, in the northern suburbs of Tokyo. Last spring my wife and I bicycled up to the park to see the tree. It was hard to miss, towering above the others in its cohort. Leaving nothing to chance, my mother-in-law had been surreptitiously fertilizing it with the leftovers of dried fish that she uses for miso soup.

Today I visited Yasukuni Shrine to take a look at the index tree. A group of children from a nearby daycare center ambled by in matching hats, while groups of Chinese tourists and Tokyo

*Continues to the next page...*

## Japanese Conversation Clubs



**The Japanese Speaking Club** is an informal meeting place for those wishing to practice Japanese. We encourage those just beginning the language as well as native speakers to gather at **Corner Coffee** in Uptown Minneapolis to meet new people, discuss experiences in Japan, or simply to speak Japanese. Activities are now suspended until local nonessential businesses reopen.

**Date/Time: ONCE CORNER COFFEE REOPENS,** Every Saturday at 3:00 p.m. (however, most people do not show up until at least 3:30.)

**Place:** Corner Coffee  
1414 W 28th St, Minneapolis, MN 55408 (Just east of Hennepin Avenue South)

Check out another conversation group: **Twin Cities Japanese Conversation Meetup Group** (<https://www.twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com/>)

*Note: This is a private group. In order to join, a questionnaire must be completed at the web site linked above.*

The goal of Twin Cities Japanese Conversation Meetup is language fluency in either Japanese or English. This group is for Japanese language learners who want to improve their Japanese speaking skills or/and native Japanese speakers who want to improve their English speaking. Those who just want to help out are also welcome.

Parts to the meetup: 自己紹介 (self-introductions), 質疑応答 (questions and answers about language) and 会話練習 (conversation practice).

**Meetings:** Edina (Monday), Minnetonka (Thursday), Saint Paul (Saturday).

**Since March 16 the group is holding all meetings online.**

For any question about this group, please email Mariquita Anderson: [mariquita@twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com](mailto:mariquita@twincitiesjapaneseconversation.com)

### Become a JASM Member online

*Support our mission and become a member!*

1. Go to [mn-japan.org](http://mn-japan.org)
2. At the top, hover over 'Support' then click on 'Join'
3. Select your membership type and read the benefits and instructions.

You can also become a member using your smartphone.

### The Index Tree continues

natives, some in kimonos, took photos of the blossoms appearing from a few of the branches. Nobody seemed concerned about World War II controversies on this lovely spring day. The index tree is a *Somei Yoshino*, treasured for its bountiful white petals that linger just a few days, then blow away with the spring winds, creating a *hanafubuki*, petal blizzard. I am worried about the tree. *Somei Yoshino* typically live about 60 years, and this one is showing its age. The shrine gardeners are tending to it carefully; the trunk is wrapped with canvas and the heavy, moss-covered branches are supported by six cedar posts. Despite these efforts, the JMA may be in need of a new index tree before too long. It is a bit far from their office, but may I recommend a strapping young tree in Toneri Park? Meanwhile, if you do find yourself in Yasukuni Shrine, clap your hands and say a prayer for the health of the current index tree. I plan to ask my mother-in-law to visit with some dried fish.

*First Published in Reader Mail in The Japan Times, April 7, 2017. Copyright Robert J Luck, 2017*

### Entertainment Recommendation from JASM Board Members while Social Distancing

Podcast: **This American Life, Last Thing Before I Go** <<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/597/one-last-thing-before-i-go>> This episode has a great Act One about Japan.

**Description:** Really Long Distance Producer Miki Meek tells the story of a phone booth in Japan that attracts thousands of people who lost loved ones in the 2011 tsunami and earthquake. A Japanese TV crew from NHK Sendai filmed people inside the phone booth, whose phone is not connected to anything at all. (22 minutes)

**Movies: Tampopo (1985)**

This movie is satisfying on so many levels. It is a spoof of Japanese society, spaghetti westerns, Yakuza, big business, you name it. It is an ode to food and eating. It is a primer on business process improvement and Kaizen. Enjoy it while eating your favorite Japanese comfort food. Available to rent for \$3-\$4 on YouTube, Google Play, Vudu, and iTunes.

**Departures (Okuribito) (2008)**

Nobody does "awkward" as well as Japanese filmmakers, and this movie is filled with awkward and touching moments as a young man returns from Tokyo to the Shonai region of Yamagata to pursue an unusual and unexpected career. Accompanied by beautiful cello music and cinematography.

Recommended by Bob Luck

**Books:**

**The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture** by Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno

**The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of the Japanese Culture** by Ruth Benedict

**Reimagining Japan: The Quest for a Future That Works** by McKinsey & Company

Recommended by Chris Armacost



# Japan America Society of Minnesota



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## 通信

Tsūshin  
April 2020

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a non-profit, non-political association engaged in bringing the peoples of Japan and the United States closer together in mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Through programs and interchange, it endeavors to promote an appreciation of cultural, educational, economic, public, and other affairs of interest to both peoples. Membership in the society is open to individuals, corporations, and other organizations interested in furthering its programs.

The Japan America Society of Minnesota is a member of the National Association of Japan-America Societies.

*(Please report any inaccuracies you find in this publication to [jasm.interns@gmail.com](mailto:jasm.interns@gmail.com))*



***Yoshida Hiroshi, Kumoi Cherry Trees, 1926, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 96.146.271***