

Japanese Embassy in FSM sponsors Press Tour of projects in Yap

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Yap, FSM—Japanese Embassies around the world sponsor press tours to showcase the projects and support the Japanese government has provided in the countries where they serve. Those press tours tend to be one day affairs in perhaps a neighboring village. But things are different in the FSM and when Ambassador Masaki Sakai invited The Kaselehlle Press to Yap in order to showcase their projects there, it required special permission from the Japanese Government.

Unlike other countries with Japanese Embassies, the FSM is spread out over thousands of miles of ocean and it is no simple matter to simply get into a car and drive to another State. Our tour involved six days away and three days of visiting sites and interviewing people.

The last day was a rest day and we were treated to a “hanging up ceremony”—a men’s standing dance in Maaki, Gagil. While there I met Jerry Cramer of RMI who I’d never met before. I explained what I was doing in Yap and he started looking around the crowd to find my host. I introduced them and Mr. Kramer immediately praised the aid that Japan had provided to Japan saying that it had always been the best type of assistance in that they always provided just exactly what was needed and the projects always worked and worked well.

My host from the Japanese Embassy could not have been more proud and rightly so. We saw examples of that type of successful grant aid and support everywhere we went in Yap.

The tour began with a courtesy call on Governor Tony Ganngiyan and Lt. Governor James Yangetmai who were extremely gracious even though they receive countless courtesy calls that I’m sure keep them away from their work.

Following that visit we interviewed Ms. Yasukawa, a JICA volunteer at Dalipebinaw Community School, a small school of only 50 students but with probably the best view in Yap.

In the afternoon we met with Ms. Christina Fillmed, Director of Yap EPA and one of my new heroes. We discussed the Fuguoka method dump system and Yap’s exemplary recycling program, both of which have been supported by the government of Japan.

On the next day we were able to see the dump site itself when we visited Mr. Johnathan Marmar and Mr. Manuel Maleichog of Yap Department of Works and Transportation. We also visited Mr. Jessi Faimaw, the owner of Island Paradise Metal Company who takes in recycled goods through the State Program and sells them for sustainability of the excellent program.

Afterwards we met with Mr. Kotobuki,

a JICA volunteer with 30 years in the fishing industry that he is now applying at Yap Fishing Authority.

The next morning we met with JICA volunteer Mr. Fujiwara, who teaches at Gaanelay School. Afterward we drove north to the College of Micronesia Fisheries Maritime Institute and met with Director Matius. On our way back to town we drove the length of the road that Japan provided that cuts across the island next to beautiful beaches. Later, during dinner, Ambassador Sakai told me that Penta Ocean, the original contractor for the Japan road recently completely refurbished the monuments at each end of the nine mile long road. They did it at their own expense.

Finally we met with JICA volunteer Mr. Kato who is helping Yap State Hospital to build a land breaking database for victims of cervical cancer, among other IT projects.

It was a lot of information to cover and rather than trying to cover each individual project in one issue, I will cover at least one in each of the next few issues.

The work that Japan has been doing in Yap has not gone unnoticed and even as we conducted our interviews, recipients, while being extremely grateful had ideas for other grants or JICA volunteers they said would help them with their work.

