

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

Distant Islands Dan McDonald

As work hopefully slows down and the weather outside turns chilly and grey, the end of year can be a great time to curl up on the sofa and catch up on TV shows or reading. One book great for holiday reading is Distant Islands; The Japanese American Community in New York City 1876 - 1930s.



Historian Daniel Inouye's work brings the stories of early Japanese immigrants back to life, as if they jumped off the page and invited us into their world for a fleeting moment. From the bold Meiji entrepreneurs who established trading businesses to Japanese immigrants, businesspeople and diplomats up to the pre-war 1930s, Inouye opens the restaurants, homes, offices and churches of the Japanese community in this distant land.

The title of the book comments on the historical lack of unity and cohesion among the Japanese community here due to social stratification and other reasons. The author, however, connects us to luminaries such as the wealthy entrepreneur Jokichi Takamine and Dr. Toyohiko Campbell Takami and his family, who vacationed with Japanese nobility at their summer estate in Cold Spring Harbor. Distant Islands also leaves us with the memorable tales of early pioneers such as Senzo Kuwayama, who patented a process for making the Japanese snack arare, which he manufactured in the basement of his home in Woodside, Queens.

Reading Distant Islands on a bleak winter's day made the cold, seemingly lifeless streets of my neighborhood in Queens come to life again with a historical richness I never knew.

Dan is a newspaper columnist, editor and Japanese translator. Interested readers can contact him at dan9605@hotmail.com

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Christopher Reeve's children Alexandra, left, Will and Matthew welcome Chie and Chiaki Imai. (Photo: Kinue Imai Weinstein)

Supporting Reeve's torch Chie Imai's 16 years passion Encourage from Japan

Ms. Chie Imai, leading designer of the luxury brand CHIE IMAI, and president Chiaki Imai both came to New York City to attend the Gala Charity event of CHRISTOPHER & DANA REEVE FOUNDATION on November 14th at Cipriani South Street.

Chie said "When I first started supporting the CHRISTOPHER & DANA REEVE FOUNDATION, both Christopher Reeve and his wife

Dana were still alive. Mr. Reeve used to say, "Nothing is impossible." His words were powerful and encouraging for people living with spinal cord injuries, their families and the communities supporting them. I remember being fascinated by his amazing attitude in the face of his disability.

Guitarist Nobuki Takamen Wins Best Songwriting Competition

Jazz guitarist Nobuki Takamen won has won first place for best instrumental song in 2019's USA Songwriting Competition. He began his original composition, "Helsingin Taivas" ("Helsinki Sky") while performing in Finland, and completed it in New York. It appears on his eighth album, 2018's



After meeting many people with spinal cord injuries, she says that she realized what was missing in the rest of the world, particularly in Japan. She was encouraged to relay Mr. Reeve's positive message of hope to Japan and the rest of the world.

During the past sixteen years, scientists and medical specialists have discovered a variety of new treatments and therapies both in the United States as well as in Japan. Many people with spinal cord injuries have enjoyed significant improvements in their mobility thanks to medical developments such as iPS treatment. Medical knowledge and practice continues to evolve regarding spinal cord injury and the word "impossible" no longer has the same meaning.

Mr. Reeve, unfortunately passed away without experiencing some of the newest and most cutting-edge treatments. Chie believes that we should all learn how important it is to be positive in life from Mr. Reeve. "His message was true for everyone, not only for those living with spinal cord injury. I believe that supporting the foundation will not only benefit people in the



"The Nobuki Takamen Trio". "This was my first time entering a songwriting competition, so when I received notice that I won, I was shocked," he commented, cheerfully. "This has inspired me; I think that I want to create 100 more original compositions." (Ryoichi Miura/ Translated by Marie Calloway)

United States, but all countries where there are people with spinal cord injuries." She said the quality of life for people with these injuries will improve if we support research in this field no matter where the research is based in the world, the United States or Japan. This is true for people no matter where they live.

"My mission is to continue to carry Mr. Reeve's torch and share his positive message of hope and progress. I realize this by continuing to support the work of the foundation which funds medical research as well as providing direct services. I travel to New York City every year to attend the Magical Evening, to see Mr. Henry Stifel who is the original founder of the foundation and to meet the foundation President Mr. Peter Wilderotter." The Magical Evening is the annual get together of the foundation supporters to ensure that Mr. Reeve's message continues to be heard. Chie and Chiaki celebrated that night with Christopher Reeve's three children, Alexandra, Matthew and Will. (Ryoichi Miura with courtesy of CHIE IMAI)



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