

Visitors from a 'sister city'

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No amount of information on schools, water storage or wastewater treatment could save Noritaka Yui from the challenge of the American green pea.

Yui, his four countrymen from the town of Kawakami in Japan and their interpreter from Tokyo had weathered a whirlwind tour of Alianza School, Fowle Reservoir and Booster Pumping Station and Watsonville's wastewater-treatment plant in enthusiastic fashion.

They took in the sights, sounds and smells of each and came out smiling. They listened politely and asked pertinent questions.

But there was Yui, seated in the Watsonville Senior Center for lunch, facing a question his culture could not answer at the moment.

Namely, how do you eat peas with a fork?

Scooping the little green balls didn't work, they rolled off and wound up in the mashed potatoes. A knife-fork combination was also tough.

Yui discovered that a spoon worked best, but when asked his estimation of American utensils, he did not hesitate to give a hometown (or country) reply — with a smile, of course.

"Chopsticks are best," he said.

Not everything concerning American culture, food or otherwise, was alien to Yui and the other Kawakami Village Council members on tour in Watsonville yesterday. Tadahiko Fujihara, Kimio Hayashi, Osamu Yui, Tanoshi Yui and interpreter Noriyuki Fuji are schooled in many



Students Evelia Sanchez (second from left) and Jason Burns show sister city delegation fifth-grade

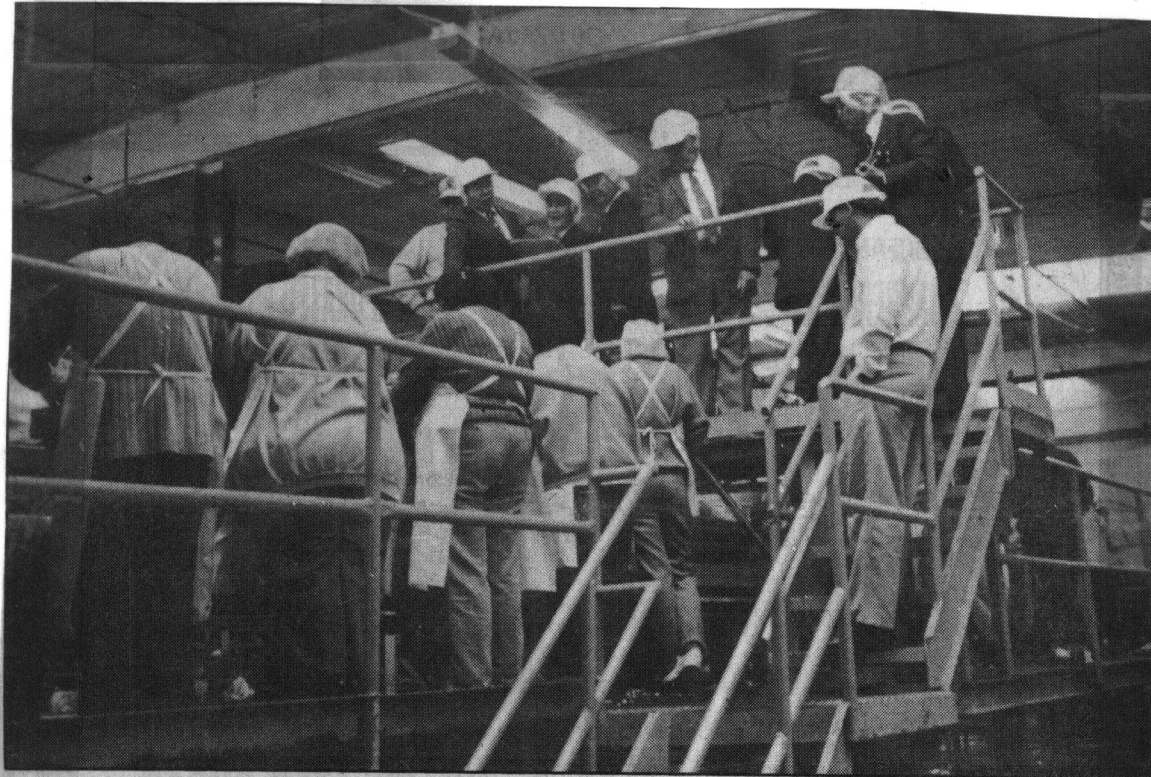
class at Alianza School. Watsonville's Tom Nakase (left) accompanied the visitors on their rounds.

Photos by Jeff Hudson

things American because many things American are now common in Japan.

Dunkin' Donuts, McDonald's and Shakey's Pizza all were mentioned by the group as American establishments common in Japan.

But many nuances of Watsonville and American cul-



Visitors watch lineworkers sort broccoli at Shaw's frozen-food plant.

ture were new to the visitors, so City Manager John Radin and Councilman Rex Clark were on hand to answer any questions.

There were plenty of questions, not all of the city management nuts-and-bolts variety, either. Radin, for instance, was asked to explain the difference between jelly, jam and preserves — not a bad question by any means.

The visitors also fielded plenty of questions from the local news media, city officials, workers and curious bystanders.

Kawakami Village Council President Kimio Hayashi gracefully accepted a barrage of questions from reporters — during lunch — and his answers shed interesting light on a culture very different from Watsonville's, different in ways such as these:

- Hayashi said a round of golf in Japan generally costs about \$100.

- Regular council members in Kawakami are paid about \$700 a month, with Hayashi making \$1,100 as president. Watsonville City Council members are paid \$50 a month. Fourteen Kawakami Council members, plus the council president, are elected for four-year

terms.

- There are no front lawns or landscaping in Kawakami. Hayashi said crops are grown as close to houses as possible to take advantage of all possible growing land. The town's economy is dependent on agriculture, with lettuce making up 76.9 percent of crop production.

- Schoolchildren in Kawakami get a one-month summer vacation beginning in July, but if a harsh winter cuts into school time, summer vacation is shortened. Educational Committee Chairman Osamu Yui said he was impressed with "how relaxed" the children were at Alianza School.

- The population of Kawakami, in contrast with Watsonville, has decreased since 1953. The town's population that year was 6,074 and in 1984 was counted at 4,783.

Members of the Japanese delegation all said they were impressed with the size of crop-fields in Watsonville and with its "open plain" landscape in general. Kawakami is located near a slope of Mt. Fuji and the town's water supply is more than adequately maintained by spring water.

Watsonville Mayor Betty Murphy posed a question to

Kawakami Deputy President Noritaka Yui and ran into a bit of All-American politics. Murphy asked Yui if she could send an official letter, signed by her, to Kawakami proclaiming the Japanese town as Watsonville's sister city.

Apparently, Murphy and the city jumped the gun in announcing sister cityhood as fact. Yui explained that the Village Council would not have the authority to approve Watsonville as a sister city until elections were held in February.

"I do not want to influence the vote," Yui said, through an interpreter.

Hayashi, however, said the vote was basically a formality. Murphy said she would wait until later to send the letter, and that her enthusiasm for Watsonville's sister city status remained unrestrained.

"I'd like to have one (sister city) for every ethnic group in town," she said.

The delegation's tour of the city continued after lunch yesterday. It was led on a tour of City Hall and the police and fire departments and will remain in town (and on tour) until Thursday morning, before returning to Kawakami.