**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Larry and Kayo Jones**

Interview Conducted by

Brandon Neal Jones

September 1, 2015

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

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**Interview History**

Interviewer: Brandon Neal Jones

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Larry and Kayo Jones is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on September 1, 2015.

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**About Larry and Kayo Jones…**

Working from President Dwight Eisenhower’s inception of Sister Cities International, Oklahoma established a relationship with Kyoto Prefecture, Japan, in 1985. Eisenhower’s nonprofit organization was established for the purpose of creating and maintaining global connections, and since its origin, the relationships across the globe now number in the thousands. As a result of the Oklahoma-Japan connection in 1985, Stillwater became the sister city of Kameoka. In November of 2015, these sister cities celebrated their thirty-year anniversary. Since the beginning of the Oklahoma-Japan relationship, Larry and Kayo Jones have been key players, and Larry was a charter member of the Sister Cities Council.

The Joneses met and married in Japan when Larry was in the Armed Forces, and he quickly developed an appreciation for and interest in the customs and cultures of other countries, specifically Japan, Kayo’s homeland. After the military, Larry earned his bachelor’s degree from Oklahoma State University, eventually going back for his master’s and PhD. After working in New Mexico and California, he wound up back at OSU where he stayed for twenty years. The couple have been to Kameoka several times, even living there for two years when Larry was the associate director of Kameoka’s OSU-K campus. In 2011, Larry was honored with the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Commendation for his twenty-five-year commitment to the US-Japan relationship. In their interview, the Joneses discuss the development and growth of Sister Cities International in Stillwater, their work and travels for the cause, and the importance of American and Japanese students in its success.

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**Larry and Kayo Jones**

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Brandon Neal Jones

September 1, 2015

Stillwater, Oklahoma

**B. Jones** *Okay, my name is Brandon Neal Jones, and today is the first of September, 2015. We are here in the home of Larry and Kayo Jones to interview them for the Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History series of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program. Today we will be discussing the Sister Cities International relationship, going on thirty years now, between Stillwater, Oklahoma, and Kameoka, Japan, and the exemplary role that the Joneses have fulfilled for their communities. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. I think the best place to start is right at the beginning. We can’t ever have enough history about where this all began.*

**Larry Jones** Okay.

**B. Jones** *Mr. Jones.*

**L. Jones** Well, it all began in 1985, spring of 1985, when the State of Oklahoma and Kyoto Prefectureentered into a sister state relationship. Soon after that, the relationship became a reality. Officials in the city of Kameoka went to prefectural offices in the capital city of Kyoto, said that they would like to establish a sister city relationship with a city in Oklahoma, and provided some information about their city. They said that they were about an hour by train from the capital, that there was a university in their city, and that a significant part of their economy was agricultural based. There was some other information, but those were the things that come to mind. The people in Oklahoma City looked at that and said they thought that Stillwater would be a perfect fit, so they contacted City Hall in Stillwater and asked if there was an interest in forming that relationship. People there said yes, they would be very interested.

**B. Jones** *So that came from the State of Oklahoma…*

**L. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *…the request did, okay.*

**L. Jones** Soon after that, a delegation from Kameoka came to Stillwater to look at our city, and in the fall of 1985 a delegation from Stillwater went to Kameoka to continue to have that discussion. While they were there, on November 3, 1985, signed the paperwork that established the sister city relationship. That was the start of it.

**B. Jones** *That was between Mayor Calvin Anthony and...*

**L. Jones** Mayor Yoshihisa Taniguchi.

**B. Jones** *Yoshihisa* *Taniguchi.*

**L. Jones** Yes. Kameoka has been in existence for centuries, no doubt, but as a incorporated city, it’s celebrating its sixtieth birthday this year, in November of this year. It was incorporated in 1955. Prior to that, there was the town of Kameoka, which was a small town and fifteen small villages in the mountains around that town. The national government sort of forced them to (Laughs) establish an incorporated larger city. Since Kameoka was the largest of the fifteen towns and villages involved, it became the name of the larger city.

At that time it had a population of about 30,000. Today its population is nearly 100,000, so it’s grown significantly in those sixty years. As you know, Brandon, the Hozu River runs through the center of Kameoka, dividing the city. It has a lot of historical places, the remains of an old castle that was built there to guard the northwest entrance to the city of Kameoka in the early 1600s, so it was there for a long time. There’s old temples and shrines that go back more than a thousand years. Izumo shrine goes back to the early 700s. Anao-ji Temple to about that time, so there’s a lot of history associated with our sister city. We’re very fortunate to have such a relationship.

**B. Jones** *Let’s see here. In 1985 we have two cities that—we’ve got an agricultural connection; we’ve got the university connection; we’ve got a similar distance from the capital as a connection. Where did the, I guess—because from what I understand, Sister Cities International is very much about citizen diplomacy, so where did that start to blossom? Where did the politics or the political side kind of step out of it, and where did the citizens, where did they really, when did that start to grow?*

**L. Jones** From very early on.

**B. Jones** *It did?*

**L. Jones** Some sister cities are established so that a city in this country, for instance, forms a relationship with a city in Africa that is very poor, and so that sister city relationship is primarily established to benefit, to help the people in Africa. They may need water. Many cities in this country with a relationship in Africa have gone and drilled water wells, or they’ve taken medical supplies or other things to help those cities economically to help them.

Some of the larger city relationships, for example Tulsa, has a very active economic relationship with some of its sister cities because they just have a lot more industry in their cities. Stillwater and Kameoka, neither of us are poor, neither of us are terribly affluent, but both are middle class kind of communities. So then from the very beginning we recognized that our primary relationship would involve one-on-one diplomacy, educational exchanges, art exchanges, these kind of things where we could both appreciate the culture and customs of the other.

**B. Jones** *And where did you get your start? Where did you and Kayo get your start with...*

**L. Jones** Oh, that was...

**B. Jones** *...with the sister cities?*

**L. Jones** Okay, there was an article in the newspaper. Just after the paperwork was signed in Kameoka, when that delegation returned they put an article in the newspaper, said we have established a sister city relationship, but City Hall cannot do it by themselves. We need volunteers. Anyone that might be interested in being a part of that, they had a meeting at the old armory. I attended that meeting and made a few comments…. When the meeting finished, I thought, “I’m not sure that I can contribute significantly to this,” so I was prepared to leave and let them move ahead with the relationship. I can thank the former city manager Carl Weinang that came up to me at the end of that and said, “We’re going to have a meeting at City Hall to establish a group,” which became the sister cities council. “Why don’t you attend that?” I thought, “Well, if he sees that I might contribute something, I’ll attend their meeting, at least.” Well, there were nine in attendance, including myself. We, by the end of that meeting, had formed a group which we called the Sister City Council, and so those nine people were the beginning of our sister cities program.

**B. Jones** *Now, some of those people, that would have been Sylvia Duncan...*

**L. Jones** She was...

**B. Jones** *…you, and are there any others that are currently still on the...*

**L. Jones** No.

**B. Jones** *Just the two of you...*

**L. Jones** We’re the only two that were there at that initial meeting.

**B. Jones** *...at the initial meeting, okay. And Cindy Petree was an early member, but not at that original...*

**L. Jones** Not at that original meeting. We call them charter members.

**Kayo Jones** Of the school, sister school.

**B. Jones** *And, now, maybe we should back up even just a little bit further because obviously you have a connection with Japan prior to the Sister Cities Council, so...*

**L. Jones** And that connection is why I went to that first meeting.

**B. Jones** *Is why you went. Let’s talk about that a little bit so that we understand, kind of, you know, how that developed. How did you two meet? You told me a little bit about it. It was at Otsu.*

**K. Jones** Yes, I was working at the Camp Otsu military base, and Japanese employee, he work there. Of course, they have to have payroll accounting. I was part-time payroll accounting there, and before payday come I used to work there. I meet him there, not only him but people there.

**L. Jones** At Camp Otsu, there was two, it was divided into two bases, posts. She worked at what was called A Camp. I worked at B Camp in communications, Signal Corps. When she would finish in the afternoon, she would go out and either catch a bus or a train back to Kyoto to her parents’ home. A Camp was the bigger camp. That’s where the PX and the theater and restaurant and the like was, so I would frequently go to A Camp and go out to catch a bus back to B Camp. I saw her, and she caught my eye, and so began to talk. I found out where she worked, and fairly often I would have to take radio teletype messages from where I was working to A Camp, to someone there at A Camp. I began to, sort of, make a habit of detouring through her building, (Laughs) as this relationship grew.

**B. Jones** *What year is this?*

**L. Jones** Nineteen fifty-six and fifty-seven.

**K. Jones** Fifty-six and fifty-seven.

**B. Jones** *Okay, so this would have been thirty years before the beginning of sister cities, and now we’re coming up on...*

**K. Jones** Before that, yeah, that’s right.

**B. Jones** ...*thirty years after, okay. So you all met there at the military base in Otsu?*

**K. Jones** Otsu, and he want to go to Kyoto to see garden. He love garden and shrine or temple.

**L. Jones** The first time I asked her for a date...

**K. Jones** Yes.

**L. Jones** ...my thinking was that we would go to dinner and then go to a movie. She said, “Why don’t we go visit a garden?” I thought, “Well, that’s really not what I had in mind.”

**K. Jones** You mentioned about garden.

**L. Jones** “I don’t want to ruin this relationship.” I said, “Sure, that’s fine.” We went to Heian Shrine. I was just enamored with the beauty of the place, and I have loved those Japanese gardens since then.

**B. Jones** *In Kyoto?*

**L. Jones** Yes.

**K. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *Is that, now, is that the Gold, the Silver, or neither?*

**L. Jones** It’s another of many, many, many there.

**B. Jones** *That’s another one, OK.*

**K. Jones** Another one, beside...

**B. Jones** *Okay, there was many that we saw while we were there and it’s...*

**K. Jones** Oh, yeah.

**B. Jones** *...they’re gorgeous.*

**L. Jones** They say that you can visit something of significance, a temple, shrine, a garden, a museum, a castle, every day for five years in Kyoto and never visit the same place twice, so there’s a lot to see in that historical city.

**B. Jones** *Okay, so that’s a previous connection that has grown and developed, and then we find in 1985, November 3, Mayor Anthony and Mayor Taniguchi signed a proclamation declaring the sister cities relationship. In that next year, we have the first Sister Cities Council. Then what is—let’s talk about, maybe, one of your first exchanges or one of your first—what was one of your first exciting memories, one of your first, you know, moments when you really realized, that, because, I mean, you’ve been a part of this for thirty years now. There had to be a moment when you were, you know, “I’m going to enjoy this. I’m going to have fun doing this.” What was that moment or...*

**L. Jones** Well, it was (Laughs) very, very early on, almost immediately. The following year, the following November, a large delegation came from Kameoka to Stillwater to celebrate the first anniversary of our sister cities relationship. We were very, very involved in that. Didn’t know how much we would be involved over the years at that time, but it’s continued from that time. During that time, the delegation visited OSU and were taken on a tour of the campus. One of the places they went was the English Language Institute, ELI. While they were there, Mayor Taniguchi asked if it might be possible for OSU to establish an English language program in Kameoka. That conversation continued, but it grew as the conversations continued and eventually became a full-fledged campus, what later became known, when it was established became known as OSU-Kyoto. It’s generally referred to as OSU-K. Most people assume that stands forKameoka, but it actually stands for Kyoto to signify the significance that it’s a state university here and so they treat it as a prefectural university there by designating it as OSU-Kyoto, OSU-K. Early on, when I heard that was going to happen, I hoped with all my being that I might become a part of it, and I became a part of it. Kayo and I spent two years on the OSU-K campus, which is less than an hour from where she lived the first twenty-two years of her life, so it was a marvelous opportunity for both of us.

**B. Jones** *When did they establish OSU-K?*

**L. Jones** The conversation started in 1986, but it didn’t evolve into a university until 1990. In late August of 1990, a group of 153 students came from to Japan to Stillwater to study English. The model for the program was a five-year model. One year of English language instruction here in Stillwater, and then they would return to Japan for the freshman- and sophomore-level general education classes, then return to Stillwater for the junior- and senior-level classes in the major area of their choice.

**B. Jones** *And you were there for two years...*

**L. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *...with that program. Now, you’ve also been writing the “Kameoka Corner” for the* Stillwater NewsPress.

**K. Jones** Yes.

**L. Jones** I have.

**B. Jones** *How long have you been working on that project? Has that been going on since...*

**K. Jones** Twenty-five?

**L. Jones** Oh, for more than twenty years.

**B. Jones** *Okay.*

**L. Jones** I wrote articles, very short articles, prior to going to Kameoka in 1990. I did that for a couple years, and then started again in 1994, and have done it continuously since 1994.

**B. Jones** *And Kayo...*

**K. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *…how do you find yourself being involved in this project?*

**K. Jones** This one, I am doing. I’m not Sister City Council, but I am helping sister school middle school to go translate for Mr. Mills. You know John Mills?

**B. Jones** *Yes.*

**K. Jones** He used to be a principal there. And, of course, and we have three boys. too. Two of them in middle school. I mean, not middle school. They are Mr. Mills’ care.

**B. Jones** *With Mr. Mills.*

**K. Jones** Yes, he’s a council, Sister City Council. Kids get from there to here, they get homesick that age, so they call me. “Kayo, what’s wrong with this kid? Have temperature.” Most times is gentler if you rest and drink a lot of water. I bring to here, to rest and let them sleep. Two three hour, they are new people. It sound like you’re okay, so I call the school. “She’s all right.” The delegation from there, and they’re helping food, need to be take care of. Most time, Larry and I go to city help, too, but most time I am doing behind and the dinner.

**B. Jones** *You’re working behind the scenes and making that wonderful sukiyaki dinner.*

**K. Jones** Oh, did you get...

**B. Jones** *Yes, I got to eat,*

**K. Jones** Oh, well that’s too many, thirty-three people...

**L. Jones** Kayo’s been almost like a mother to a lot of the students…

**K. Jones** Yes, I have some parents say, “Thank you for taking care of my daughter or son,” and writing for Japanese students. I hang out there, and I went to school there, how they do here in America so I go there to tell them.

**B. Jones** *So you provide a little bit of a home away from home?*

**K. Jones** Yes, I’m volunteer, strictly volunteer. I still doing for the college student OSU, and they are short time to stay, but its sad day always because they are leaving quickly. I invite them at least once to American home because the Japanese are so small, number is small. I just want to do not only Japanese student, I have some Chinese, Korean, lots of.... They speak different, but we speak one English.

**B. Jones** *Yeah, so we have a pretty healthy exchange program here in Stillwater?*

**K. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *Is it middle school only, or...*

**K. Jones** Middle school only. We only one middle school here.

**L. Jones** Primarily middle school. From time to time there’ll be a Wings of Rotary exchange student from Japan at the high school. There’s an exchange student there this year.

**B. Jones** *I did get to meet him briefly at the...*

**L. Jones** Pizza party the other night.

**B. Jones** *Yes.*

**K. Jones** People are wonderful when you try to help. They didn’t tell me thank you, no, but later on, “Oh, that is Mrs. Jones!” Even OSU-K student from Japan, father of OSU, not OSU-K because long ago he was here. Their son came to OSU-K, and the entrance day we have Kyoto, (is that right?)…

**L. Jones** Yes.

**K. Jones** …and he, man, looks like gray hair. I am gray, too, but he was more white hair.

**L. Jones** Yes.

**K. Jones** He keep looking at me, so I just look down. I was thinking, “But I don’t know him.” When I looking up, he still looking. After finish, he come to hurry to get me, so I move away to go to home. “Are you Kayo Jones?” “Yes, who are you?” I say. “I am Mr. Kitagawa. I used to be OSU student. I come to you house. You prepare Japanese food. I never forget. This time, my son, this one going to be OSU-K, so when he come, will you take care of?” “I sure will.” At least once, everybody been here, most people.

**B. Jones** *Well, that’s very nice, and you wouldn’t have stories like that...*

**K. Jones** It’s a wonderful feeling when he first thought, “Hmm, I don’t know I can do or not.” Of course, he help, too. We have three boys, but they never complain. Always somebody here, but our boys, maybe God put us that way to raise them. They never complain. He doesn’t complain, but he doesn’t have to do cooking. (Laughs)

**L. Jones** Many students have come, and with the Japanese food that they can eat, with a Japanese host, with a Japanese room, they say, “I really feel comfortable in your home. Please invite me back.”

**K. Jones** Some want to come back, and come back... (Laughter)

**L. Jones** That first year, the 153 students that were here for a year, virtually every one of them had a meal in our home, and through the years.... At the pizza party, there were about twelve students, OSU students, from Japan. She already has all their names and telephone numbers…

**K. Jones** I did, but they written down in Japan their phone number.

**L. Jones** …and they will be here. (Laughs)

**K. Jones** Dorm number I want so I can call them. How can I contact? I talked to Stephanie to, “Would you please tell them to write telephone number, each kid, so I can...”

**B. Jones** *For the US.*

**K. Jones** That’s right.

**B. Jones** *Let me take a quick look here. We have that first delegation that came, the large delegation that came to celebrate the one-year anniversary. And then did we do a five-year anniversary?*

**L. Jones** We did.

**K. Jones** Yes.

**L. Jones** Delegation from there came here, and delegation from here went there.

**B. Jones** *And was that the trilateral, or was that later?*

**L. Jones** That was later. That was after the fifth anniversary.

**B. Jones** *That was after, okay.*

**L. Jones** Between the fifth and tenth. I don’t remember the exact time.

**K. Jones** And we went ten years, too.

**L. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *Why don’t you tell me a little bit about that fifth anniversary, or did you go to Kameoka on that one?*

**L. Jones** Yes. We went for the fifth anniversary; we went for the tenth anniversary; for the fifteenth anniversary. If there’s a delegation going, we try to go.

**B. Jones** *There was something that Sylvia [Duncan] mentioned. She mentioned a wedding. There was a koen? Am I pronouncing that correctly?*

**K. Jones** Wedding, whose wedding?

**B. Jones** *No, no, no, no, not koen. That’s the garden. Ryokan, that you all would stay at a ryokan that had a beautiful, white, wedding kimono in the lobby. Does this ring a bell at all? Let’s see.*

**K. Jones** When we went there? Sylvia went there, didn’t she?

**B. Jones** *I’m not sure which time this was, and I’m not sure which.... Let’s see. She made the comment, though, about how the ryokan owner, how he was letting them try on this gorgeous, white, wedding kimono that they probably should not have been wearing.*

**L. Jones** Okay, there was a couple in Kameoka that had a company that made the silk brocade that was used to make...

**K. Jones** That’s right, silk company.

**L. Jones** ...wedding kimonos. I remember that most of the women tried one of those on, and that was in Kameoka.

**B. Jones** *Okay. Well, tell me about your trips over there with the delegations. Just kind of, you know, what did you experience? What did you enjoy?*

**L. Jones** Oh, it was wonderful treatment. We were able to experience their culture and their customs and their kindness. Enjoyed the beauty of the old city. Every one of the visits we’ve made to Kameoka have been special. We’ve visited the elementary school several times, had meals in the elementary schools. The children would sit, and we would try to get a conversation. Just so many wonderful experiences. The two years that we spent in Kameoka with the OSU-K program, near the end of that, the president of the rotary club asked me if I would speak to their rotary club about our experiences in Kameoka during the two years that we were there. Perhaps theonly thing that’s worthy of remembering, I said to them, “The thing that has impressed me most about my stay in Japan these two years is the kindness that I’ve observed, not the kindness shown to me. As a foreign tourist, I expect that I would be treated very well. What I’m speaking of is the kindness that you show one to another every day.” Their vocabulary is structured such that as they speak to one another, it’s in a very kind and thoughtful way. I’ve just always been amazed at their kindness to one another, as well as to foreign tourists visiting their country.

**B. Jones** *And how was your time over there, Kayo? Did you enjoy being close to family?*

**K. Jones** Japan is my birthplace, in Kyoto. Sure, every time I go home, I let my mother know first, and Mother call my classmate. “Kayo is coming, so would you give her call at this number? That’s her number.” This is the OSU-K, I was working there at the library for students, but classmates have reunion, classmate all junior high, high school classmate. They calling each other, “Kayo coming.” I did see only my address is American way, 319 North Donaldson, but all other is Japanese. Like for the Japanese got married to Japanese. Of course, the boys were saying, “Why don’t you come home?” “Well, I have son, three boys, and grandchildren there, that and my husband’s there. I have to be there.” I like to be there, but it’s nice to come home. They are so home. I haven’t seen them long time. And hug each other, that’s where I learned now hugging strange people. I mean it’s not strange, but classmate long ago, but they hug me, too, and they, “Welcome home,” and, “Stay longer.”

**B. Jones** *So you all were able to get together for those two years that you were there at OSU?*

**K. Jones** I call my mother...

**L. Jones** Sometimes, when we’ve gone back. Now, the Japanese are amazingly good at networking. What she’s talking about goes back fifty years to when she was in elementary and junior high school, and they still are—most of them still live very close to where they were born. They get together. When they find out she’s coming, they plan to get together and have a meal and have a fellowship together. It’s pretty amazing.

**K. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *And when you were over there, what was your position with OSU-K? What were you doing over there?*

**L. Jones** I was the associate director, and I taught physics.

**B. Jones** *You were teaching physics and the associate director. And did I catch you were working at the...*

**K. Jones** At the library. Did you go Kameoka?

**B. Jones** *I did get there but I did not get to OSU-K.*

**K. Jones** Oh, you didn’t? That’s where his office, was and I was working at Old Central, just like OSU.

**B. Jones** *The copy of Old Central?*

**K. Jones** That building, I was there, library there, and...

**L. Jones** It’s an amazing likeness.

**K. Jones** …it’s beautiful.

**B. Jones** *I have seen some photos of it, but I did not get to see it myself, and I regret that.*

**K. Jones** You must went to there to ask them, “I’m from Stillwater.” They like to have Stillwater people. (Laughs)

**B. Jones** *Well, I’ll tell you more about that here in just a little bit.*

**K. Jones** Okay.

**B. Jones** *Trying to think. So we’ve got—this is 1992, about, that you were coming back to the US?*

**K. Jones** Ninety-three.

**L. Jones** There from ʼ91 to ʼ93.

**B. Jones** *So then you would be coming up on the tenth anniversary, then, of the sister city shortly there after that. Did we have a delegation come here? Did you go back to Kameoka?*

**K. Jones** They came, too.

**L. Jones** Both. They had a delegation come here; delegation from here went there. We were a part of it.

**B. Jones** *Did you have some—what were some of the main activities involved with that? A ten-year anniversary, that was probably a pretty big celebration.*

**K. Jones** I have old picture…I was going to show.

**L. Jones** At that time, they had just completed a new city hall, shortly before.

**B. Jones** *Stillwater or Kameoka?*

**K. Jones** Kameoka.

**L. Jones** Kameoka.

**K. Jones** Beautiful building there.

**L. Jones** It’s no doubt the envy of every city in Kyoto Prefecture, a beautiful nine- or ten-story city hall, that when it was completed was completely payed for, debt free. They manage their funds extremely well. It’s very, very impressive. Every time we’d go, we’d ride the Hozu rapids. That’s been a while. I don’t remember all the exact things we did at that exact time.

**K. Jones** They have big reception.

**B. Jones** *Would that have been the time—when did they bring over the materials for the garden?*

**L. Jones** Soon after.

**B. Jones** *Was that about that time?*

**L. Jones** It was about 1996 or ʼ7.

**B. Jones** *Okay.*

**K. Jones** Yeah.

**B. Jones** *So that was right after the tenth anniversary. And do you want to tell me a little bit about what they did, because that was quite a gift from Kameoka.*

**L. Jones** It was, indeed, yes. The first time I went, we went to Kameoka after the sister city relationship was formed was in 1987. Kayo and I and the McKinleys, who were friends, visited Japan, went to Kameoka. Something was said about Japanese gardens, and I said I like them a lot. They rounded up one of the staff members at City Hall. We sat down and talked about Japanese gardens, and he gave me a set of plans. Says, “Take these back toStillwater in case there’s anyone interested, if the city’s interested in building a garden.” Well, we talked about that every time we’d have a monthly meeting. My contribution was, “Let’s build a garden.” That didn’t happen.

When we went in 1995 for the tenth anniversary, they said, “There is a group of Japanese landscape gardeners here that are discussing the possibility of building a garden in Stillwater. You will be hearing from them.” Not too long after we returned, we heard from them. They intended to do that in the summer. I’m sure it was 1996. A small group of the gardeners came, and we looked at several sites in Stillwater as possible sites for a garden. The site just north of the Community Center where the garden is was actually the second choice, but it has worked out very, very well. They made arrangements to rent heavy equipment or machinery that would be needed in the construction, a big crane, a Bobcat, and other equipment. We went to Oklahoma City, and we went to a rock place. They picked out some rocks. They said, “We would like to use these rocks in a smaller garden at OSU out at the Botanic Garden.”

I spoke to the manager, the owner of the rock collection, whatever it’s called. Told him that they would like to buy these rocks but they wouldn’t be back until September. I thought he’d say, “Well, you come back in September, and we’ll talk about this.” He said, “We’ll set them aside, and whenever they’re ready for them, they can come pick them up.” We went to a nursery on North Perkins Road which was there at that time. They picked out over $5,000 worth of plants, trees, topsoil, fertilizer. Said, “We want you to set this aside, and we’ll be back in September.” I thought they would respond the same. They said, “We’ll set them aside. When you’re ready for them, come and get them.” We called a company in, Ponca City about a big crane that they would need to move heavy rocks and lanterns. They just, “We’ll set it aside for you. You don’t just get the crane. We won’t rent the crane without an operator.” We told them what day we wanted them to bring the crane.

Before they came, they shipped over twenty tons of material from Japan, payed for entirely by the City of Kameoka, volunteer gifts from citizens of Kameoka, donated money, and the gardeners donated their money and time. They said, “We will be there on a certain day, and there are two shipping containers that will arrive on the morning of that day.” I thought, “You’re putting a lot of confidence in this shipment.” The morning they said they would be there, those two shipping containers showed up. The crane showed up with the operator. It was just amazing. Those gardeners all came from Kameoka, and on a daily basis they were competing with one another for business in Kameoka, but while they were here, they worked together like a well-oiled machine. I mean, every morning they would meet, and each would be assigned their responsibility for that day. That heavy crane operator worked with one of the gardeners. They didn’t speak the same language, but that crane operator would set those big stones exactly where that gardener told him. It was just an amazing thing to watch.

**B. Jones** *Those boulders, those were sourced out of the Hozu River, correct?*

**L. Jones** It’s from that area, yes. During the two weeks that they were constructing, the people of Stillwater, almost a steady stream of cars coming by, honking and waving and stopping, thanking them for what they were doing.

**K. Jones** They were happy, and the men can’t speak, you know, but everybody was waving.

**L. Jones** School children would come and bring cookies. School classes would come and ask, “Tell us what you’re doing.” One man who had fought during the Second World War came by and said, “I have not liked the Japanese since the Second World War, but seeing what these guys are doing, I have to put that behind me and move on. I’ve brought thirty tickets for the OSU football game on Saturday, and I’d like to give them to them and whoever’s going to take them to the game as my way of saying I’ve accepted you as being really good people.” So it touched the lives of a lot of people in Stillwater.

**B. Jones** *Well, it sounds like it, and it sounds like...*

**K. Jones** You know, people are change, like this man. Of course, during the war, he went to the war. My family, too, my uncle, too, never come back. I was a little girl, so it hurt me when you come to someone say something like, “I don’t buy Japanese product,” or something like that. Hurt me, but you have to listen to our side, too, but war is just need be part.

**B. Jones** *Well, and it sounds like that, you know, that idea of citizen diplomacy, that that is very much alive and well within this organization and...*

**K. Jones** Yeah, now I love to stay here. I love to stay. I love people, Stillwater people. I don’t know everybody, but most people, “Are you Kayo?” “Yes,” Well, sometimes he mention me in “Kameoka Corner,” so, I have student...

**B. Jones** *So, let’s see. Probably the late ʼ90s is what we’re about up to here. Trying to think. Oh, what point—let’s see. So Mayor Taniguchi and Mayor Calvin Anthony, those were the two that were kind of at the beginning of all of this, but we’ve had several mayors since. Now Kameoka, Taniguchi has been the mayor up until pretty recent, right?*

**K. Jones** For twenty year.

**L. Jones** There have been four mayors involved, no, three mayors. Mayor Taniguchi followed by Mayor [Hideo] Tanaka followed by Mayor [Masataka] Kuriyama, so there’s only been three. There will be a fourth in November.

**B. Jones** *Who was the third?*

**L. Jones** Kuriyama.

**K. Jones** Kuriyama.

**L. Jones** He’s just about to finish and doesn’t plan to run for re-election.

**B. Jones** *And is it... Did I hear correctly that the fourth, the mayor that is coming up, he was one of the gardeners that installed...*

**K. Jones** That’s right, that’s right. I’m very happy about that because he’s...

**L. Jones** Mayor...

**K. Jones** [Takahiro] Katsuragawa, his name.

**L. Jones** Mayor Katsuragawa.

**K. Jones** If you don’t know spell, I will tell you.

**L. Jones** Spell it just like it sounds.

**K. Jones** He’s a very, very nice person.

**B. Jones** *Tell me about some of the annual activities that you all do here in Stillwater. I know that you all—we talked about the sukiyaki dinner that I got to join in on. That was excellent, but tell me about some of just the local events that the Stillwater Sister Cities Council hosts.*

**L. Jones** Oh, through the years, we have the monthly meetings where we discuss activities that we need to be involved in, what’s going on in Kameoka, if there’s any exchanges coming up, what we might do to strengthen our relationship, just whatever we need to talk about. You mentioned the sukiyaki dinner. We’ve done that annually for several years. In recent years, we’ve done the pizza party which we had at Hideaway last week. Prior to that, for a number of years we did an ice cream social at the Wes Watkins Center for the Japanese students, most of whom were in ELI at that time, so it was very convenient for them. In recent years we’ve done the pizza party instead. A few years ago we did a hayride at a farm south of town. Actually, Stephanie and her husband own the property. Went down and did the hayride and a wiener roast. Had a really nice time.

**B. Jones** *It seems like a lot of the activities the Sister Cities Council does is with students coming to OSU from Japan or students coming to the high school, the junior high, or middle school. Now you all—would you say that a focus is on the students, or is that just...*

**L. Jones** A lot of the activities are focused on the students, yes. We have a potluck dinner every Christmas, and we’ve done that for a number of years.

**B. Jones** *And does the Sister Cities Council, do you all work with the exchange program with junior high, or actually, I know because we have the sister schools and we have the Sister Cities Council. Are those completely separate programs…*

**L. Jones** No.

**B. Jones** *…or do you all very much work together and...*

**K. Jones** together...

**L. Jones** Very much work together, yes.

**B. Jones** *Okay.*

**L. Jones** The sister schools came about because of the sister city relationship. …

**K. Jones** That’s…sister school was.

**B. Jones** *And about how long has that been running?*

**L. Jones** I think it started in 1989, so it was...

**B. Jones** *Oh, it was almost...*

**K. Jones** Eighty-nine?

**L. Jones** Yes. No later than ʼ89, I know.

**K. Jones** Well, ʼ89 it started. We would be in Kameoka to bamboo fields.

**L. Jones** Nineteen ninety, there was a large group of students went to Kameoka.

**K. Jones** Nineteen ninety, oh, I was there.

**L. Jones** Yes, because of the sister school relationship.

**B. Jones** *What else would you like to just tell me about the history and about you two, you and Kayo, about your involvement in Sister Cities Council and also where you’d kind of like to see it go? You know, you’ve been a part of the past thirty years. Where would you like to see it go into the future? Do you have any hopes or expectations for its....*

**K. Jones** I know where he want to go. (Laughter)

**L. Jones** There’s been a number of adult delegations go to Kameoka, and it’s a wonderful experience. I’ve been part of a number of them. It’s a wonderful experience, and you make good friends. You come back re-energized to work harder in the program, etcetera. But when students go, particularly the ones that have gone from here have been middle school students, when they go, it can be a life changing experience. It’s not something that they come back and say, “Hey, I really had fun,” and that’s the end of it. It has changed a number of lives in very, very significant ways.

**K. Jones** Even the college-age students, I wanted them to have a good experience to take home to tell other students. They may come back, and they did come back to OSU.

**B. Jones** *Have you seen a kind of word of mouth, as far as, you know, somebody comes to OSU or comes to the Stillwater Public Schools, and then later on you find out, you know, they’ve sent their younger sibling, or they’ve sent a friend of theirs. Are you seeing that sort of...*

**L. Jones** Some of that. You know, the one that...

**K. Jones** Father, father and son...

**L. Jones** …the father she talked to, his son came. It must have been around 2000, maybe 2005, the city commissioner at that time, Bud Lacy (he later became the mayor) was city commissioner at that time. He went as part of a delegation and took his son, who was a sophomore, junior in high school and never been out of the country. He enjoyed it a great deal. The next summer, he says, “Dad, let’s you and I go back to Japan by ourselves,” and they did. Had a wonderful time. Today that son lives in Japan. Has been there for at least five years, probably more than five years, and is likely to continue to live there for maybe a very long time. He just loves it.

**K. Jones** His mother wants him to come home. “Time to come home,” quite a while ago. “But Mom, I like Japan,” so he’s still there, still.

**B. Jones** *How old would you say he was on that first trip?*

**L. Jones** Oh, probably fifteen.

**K. Jones** Yeah, he was a little boy. Now he’s a grown man.

**B. Jones** *So an adolescent, and now that trip changed his life.*

**K. Jones** That’s right.

**L. Jones** There was an OSU-K student from Oklahoma City, Jason Good, that...

**K. Jones** Jason Good, yes, he lives in Japan.

**L. Jones** ...studied on the OSU-K campus for about a year. Came back to OSU and graduated, went back to Kameoka. He still lives in Kameoka, and that was in the early ʼ90s. He still lives in Kameoka, is married to a Japanese girl.

**K. Jones** They have a little boy.

**L. Jones** He has bought a business recently and is doing very, very well. Those kind of things are not unusual.

**B. Jones** *Let’s see, 2005, that’d be the thirtieth anniversary. No, I’m sorry.*

**K. Jones** No, twenty.

**B. Jones** *That’d be twentieth anniversary; 2010 would have been our twenty-fifth anniversary, which I believe is when the ocarina players came?*

**L. Jones** They came earlier than that.

**B. Jones** *Was it earlier than that?*

**K. Jones** Yeah.

**L. Jones** They came in 2001.

**B. Jones** *Oh, it was way earlier.*

**L. Jones** Quite a bit earlier, yes.

**B. Jones** *Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about that because that sounded like that was quite an event.*

**L. Jones** It was. If I were to list the three favorite programs or activities that the sister city program has been involved in, one of them would be the ocarina group, one would be the garden, and one would be OSU-K. The ocarina group came on a very cold and icy January day in 2001. Not long after they arrived in Stillwater that evening, they closed Interstate 35, out from about [Highway] 51 almost to Oklahoma City because of the ice. We’d made arrangements with a number of families in Stillwater. The group was around thirty, so we needed several host families to be their homestay families. Several of them called, said, “We’re not going to be able to do it because we’ve lost our power.” Tree limbs down; power lines down.

I thought, “Oh, this is going to be an absolute disaster. These people have come all this way in this kind of weather. No one’s going to show up.” Well, when the performance started that evening in the auditorium at the Wes Watkins Center, [it] seats about 400, and there were very nearly 400 there. It was just amazing. They played a little instrument called an ocarina, which is a small, about six-inch clay flute. The one that each person used, they made themselves from clay that was excavated when they started building the foundation for what’s called the Gallery of Kameoka in Kameoka, a large convention center. Made those, came, performed for a full house on that cold, windy evening, and it was just really a wonderful event.

**B. Jones** *That sounds like that would have been...*

**K. Jones** Did you know ocarina instrument?

**B. Jones** *I saw a...*

**K. Jones** At the Kameoka Room?

**B. Jones** *…yes, in the Kameoka Room.*

**K. Jones** That we donated because they brought to us. I had a lot of homestay.

**L. Jones** I have one right in there.

**B. Jones** *I saw the one that was in the Kameoka Room...*

**K. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *...and Sylvia explained a little bit about.... I wasn’t sure if that was from the clay that was from Kameoka, or if that was just another ocarina, but that’s one that was created...*

**K. Jones** Yes, their clay.

**B. Jones** ...*from that clay.*

**K. Jones** They made it.

**B. Jones** *Well, are there any other—I know we’re probably missing things here but…. Oh, actually, there is one more thing that I wanted to be sure and ask you about, and that was.... Your commendation by (let me make sure I get this right) being honored by the Foreign Ministry of Japan. Why don’t you tell us...*

**L. Jones** Received that award in 2011. It’s a commendation that has my name on it, but Kayo has been from the very beginning very, very involved in all this. The commendation was given because of our involvement with the Japanese students here in Stillwater, as well as in Japan. I think probably that was initiated by someone in Kameoka, probably the mayor at that time.

**B. Jones** *What was the name of that award?*

**L. Jones** Foreign Minister’s Commendation.

**K. Jones** We have one in living room. We framed it.

**B. Jones** *In your living room, okay. We’ll get a picture of that before we head out. Was that conferred here, or was that over in Japan?*

**L. Jones** It was here.

**K. Jones** At OSU. We had about 300 people attending.

**L. Jones** The Consul General [Lloyd Hardin]stationed in Houston came to Stillwater to present it personally, so it was a ...

**B. Jones** *I bet that was a very nice evening.*

**L. Jones** …very nice honor.

**B. Jones** *Yeah. Are there any other things that you two would like to...*

**L. Jones** Well, you asked what we envision or hope for the future.

**B. Jones** *Yes.*

**L. Jones** One of those I was talking about the impact on children’s lives. We haven’t had a youth exchange in recent years. We’re going to Kameoka in November. I hope to be able to talk to someone in the educational system there, a superintendent of schools or whoever, about the possibility of getting something up and going again that would allow students to go from Stillwater to Kameoka or from Kameoka to Stillwater because it impacts the students from Stillwater’s lives. It also impacts the life of students in Kameoka in the same way. I don’t think we can do anything better than impact the lives of young people, so that would be my main goal.

**B. Jones** *Would you like to add anything to that Kayo?*

**K. Jones** Yes. Well, I hope—I’ve been doing this for thirty years. I just had a surgery, and my strength is not like used to. I can't help very much, but when the day come, I will help translate or whatever they need. I been helping city, try to do whatever they need, school or hospital or general...

**L. Jones** And you never know when you help someone when that’s going to go full circle and come back to you. At some point in this relationship, there was a girl in Oklahoma City that needed some help. I don’t even remember what help she needed, what Kayo did for her.

**K. Jones** They call from Oklahoma City Governor’s office.

**L. Jones** We were at the airport in Osaka, checking through customs, or immigrations, to board our plane. Someone had given us a gift, a tiny little sword, part of a samurai set about like so in that box. One of the immigration people said, “You’re going to have to open that box and let us look at that.” There was a girl working with him, said to her, “Aren’t you Kayo Jones?”

**K. Jones** Because my passport, they open it. “Yes.” So I said to her, “I’m not supposed to bring those things, but gift,” so I just...

**L. Jones** She said, “Yes.” The girl said, “You’re good to go. You helped me in Oklahoma City. I’ll return that favor right now.”

**K. Jones** I help her long ago. I don’t even remember…

**L. Jones** We don’t even know when it was.

**K. Jones** ...but she told me, “You help me when I had problem,” I didn’t remember, “so you don’t have to open. Just go.” So that’s nice to hear.

**B. Jones** *To know that you’ve been able to touch people...*

**K. Jones** Yeah.

**B. Jones** *...and to also, to have been touched by so many people.*

**L. Jones** That’s right.

**K. Jones** That’s right, I think so, yeah.

**B. Jones** *I think this has been a wonderful interview. I thank you both for taking the time to do this with me.*

**L. Jones** You’re very welcome. Thank you for doing so.

**B. Jones** *I’m looking forward to the thirtieth anniversary celebration that’s coming up October 25, and if there’s any last little things that you would like to say to the camera....* (Laughter) *But otherwise...*

**L. Jones** We’re honored to be a part of this, so thank you for coming and talking with us.

**K. Jones** Yes.

**B. Jones** *Thank you, and thank you for showing me this room. This is...*

**K. Jones** Ah, thank you.

**B. Jones** *...this is wonderful.*

**L. Jones** It’s a pretty amazing place.

**------- *End of interview*** *-------*