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Two Wonderful Days!

by *Anu Lehtinen, Hamina Club, Finland, SIE*

I have had two absolutely marvellous days with our SI sisters from SI of Hakodate, Japan. Four sisters arrived to Hamina last Thursday, and yesterday (Friday) we had a big party for them. At 5 pm, we and all representatives from Zonta-club of Hamina and Rotary-clubs of Hamina were guests of the town of Hamina. The mayor of Hamina and some other city executives offered a cocktail party for us in the town hall of Hamina. After that, there was a celebration dinner in a restaurant where we ate Finnish food: lavaret, lamb, turnip and arctic cloudberry for desert. Everything was so wonderful! Japanese sisters wore their kimonos and we wore Finnish national dresses (VERY HOT to wear a Finnish national dress when the temperature is about +27 degrees C, because Finnish national dresses are made of linen, cotton and WOOL!!!)

After the great meal we were all invited to one of our member's home, and there we ate strawberries and blueberries and drank champagne. I played piano (two pieces from Sibelius) and Finnish national instrument "kantele".

And the best part of this celebration was when Irma Vitikainen's husband called and said that Irma is much better now, and soon she will be allowed to have guests to her room in the hospital. So soon - I hope - I can bring your wonderful and supporting messages to her. I know she will appreciate them very much.

Now it's almost 2 pm and I just came home from a Japanese tea ceremony. Sisters from Japan wanted to thank us for our hospitality and they organised a real Japanese tea ceremony for us. It was SO exciting!! They served us one cup of tea each, then they asked if some of us wanted to make tea when they would teach. I wanted to try, of course. I was thrilled!!! One of my dreams came true when I tried to learn how to move my hands and my fingers in the right way, and finally I succeeded to make one cup of tea, and it was served to my dear friend Dr Eva-Anita Kiviniemi. I told Mrs Sakiko Watanabe that they fulfilled one of my dreams and I was very honoured that they gave me the opportunity to learn even a little about their tea ceremony. As you can see from my text - I'm still high in the clouds... During the ceremony I wore a Japanese "happy-coat" which my father brought to me 15 years ago when he visited Japan.

Now I try to concentrate for tomorrow! 5 am I will start to drive to Helsinki and try to be in time for our breakfast meeting.

Still floating somewhere in Finnish/Japanese heaven...