

My family and I continue to be overwhelmed by the experience of our visit to Fukuoka. Although it has been months since our visit, we continue to uncover and unravel new observations, insights, and elements of discovery. Even though we are all family, when we discuss our trip, the communications are more intuitive than verbal. We look at each other, cite an episode, and then smile and acknowledge the experience.

When you know, you know.

Perhaps the best example is our visit to Yame. We visited a park that is close to my family's ancestral village of Yokoyama, and has a bronze bust of my father. Throughout that visit, I kept thinking of how my father used to say to me when I was a small child, "Our family was very happy living there and but for a trick of fate, our family would never have left that village." Had my great grandparents never left that village to work in the cane fields of Kauai to repay a debt, our family would never have come to America, and that bust would never have been erected.

We then visited the family grave, a location filled with meaning and spirituality. The quiet seclusion only heightened the gravity of the moment for us.

The visit to the family house was even more remarkable. As we traversed the winding roads to the house, the knowledge that we were traveling the same pathways my great grandparents walked when they left the village to work at McBryde Sugar Plantation was incredibly profound. Knowing this was the path they walked was one thing, but experiencing it and viscerally understanding the arduous nature of this journey was truly humbling.

However, the moment that perhaps left the greatest impression upon us was visiting the family home and meeting with relatives. The aloha with which they greeted us was amazing, and even though there was a significant language barrier, everyone understood the significance of the moment. It was an unforgettable experience.

There is much more that I should write about, but it is truly hard to put into words. Suffice to say, this was an experience none of us will forget.

Sincerely,

Ken Inouye