

Thank You Reception and Otokoyama Honten Speech

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us at this reception. This is the conclusion of our Day of Remembrance, Day of Preparedness, Day of Rebuilding. This morning, we took part in activities at Fisher Pavilion to send a message of hope to Seattleites. At the Kobe Bell, we shared a moment of silence for the nearly 20,000 lost on March 11th last year. We reaffirmed our bonds of friendship and our commitment to the future.



This is a “thank you” reception for you all who spent time supporting Japan and joining us today for the one year memorial. *Otsukaresama deshita*. Thank you for your dedication.



I would like to finish my speech by telling you a story of revival.

1. Otokoyama Honten, which ranks among the best breweries in Japan and has won medals at the International Wine Challenge in London, was established 100 years ago. The main office was built in Kesennuma in 1931 and was designated a National Cultural Monument.
2. On March 11th, the city of Kesennuma was struck by a tsunami about 30 feet high, causing the loss of 1,400 lives. The 1st and 2nd stories of the 3-story Otokoyama Honten office building collapsed and were carried away by the tsunami.



The staff was able to evacuate in time, and fled to the brewery 500 feet away up a hill. Before their eyes the tsunami carried away the town and approached their refuge, but the water stopped just yards away from the brewery.

After the waters receded, there were no utilities of any kind. Some of the staff lost homes and families in the disaster.

3. Everything seemed to be lost, but in the depths of despair, they realized they could hear the “pop, pop” noise of fermentation inside the mash tanks, and the sound got stronger every day. The staff felt as though there was life in the tank, and wanted to see it delivered.

They decided to spearhead the revival of Kesennuma. They borrowed a generator to operate the brewery. They used ice and well-water to regulate the fermentation process. The sake turned out fine, so they bottled 320 bottles on March 28th. They sold them and donated all of the money to the Japanese Red Cross.

4. The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs ordered sake from Otokoyama Honten to encourage the recovering region and sent us these bottles to share with you the taste of revival. It is right over here! I hope you enjoy it!

Thank you!

