

Japanese garden dedicated at Clark

College site, symbol of friendship, named for former Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard



Photos by ZACHARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian

Clark College alumna Michelle Sohm, 21, of Vancouver attempts to keep her kimono dry while attending the Sakura Festival and dedication Thursday of the Royce Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden.



Former Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard, left, and Clark College President Robert Knight unveil the marker to the Royce Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden during the Sakura Festival.

By JACQUES VON LUNEN
Columbian staff writer

In Japanese culture, the cherry blossom — or *Sakura* — is a symbol for the transience of beauty and for living life in the moment. It's also a symbol for the beauty of spring.

Alas, the dedication of a new Japanese garden in Vancouver that itself bears much symbolism, took place under skies that were neither beautiful nor springlike.

A crowd of nearly 200 huddled under umbrellas and canopies for the opening ceremony of the Royce E. Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden on the campus of Clark College on Thursday. Rain poured onto the granite slabs and rock sculptures surrounded by cherry trees.

The garden is a gift from Chihiro Kanagawa, the chief executive of Shin-Etsu Chemical Co., the parent company of SEH America. SEH does not disclose exact personnel numbers, but it is estimated that the company employs about 700 workers in Clark County.



On the Web

See a video of the ceremony at www.columbian.com/video

Garden

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Kanagawa requested that the garden be named after Pollard, Vancouver's former mayor, said Tim Leavitt, the city's current mayor, during the ceremony. Pollard was reluctant to accept this, but Kanagawa insisted, Leavitt said.

That insistence became apparent again Thursday in a letter from Kanagawa read by Tatsuo Ito, a vice president of SEH America.

"I consider Mayor Pollard not only a great community leader, but also a lifetime friend," Ito read

from the letter.

The garden is meant "to show support to this amazing community and its leaders," Ito said.

He called the garden a "lasting symbol of close friendship beyond business that has matured over the years with this city."

Ito said the relationship between city, college and local silicon wafer manufacturer sustains the economy of the Vancouver community.

Pollard, after a few quips about the inclement weather, reminisced about planting some of the large cherry trees that ring the campus's green spaces. The trees were planted in 1990 to commemorate

Washington's 100th anniversary of statehood. They'd been a gift from another Japanese high-tech manufacturer.

"As those trees have grown, so has our understanding of the importance ... of understanding each other," Pollard said.

He said Kanagawa always appreciated the Vancouver community and what it has done for the company.

The SEH facility in eastern Vancouver is the most productive of all the SEH sites around the world, Pollard said.

Thursday's ceremony also was one of many around the country this year to honor the 100th

anniversary of a Japanese gift of cherry trees planted along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C., said Takamichi Okabe, the consul general of Japan in Portland.

But because of the Japan-Vancouver relationship that dates back to 1834, when three shipwrecked Japanese sailors washed up on the Washington Coast and eventually wound up at Fort Vancouver, Okabe considered Thursday's event one of the most significant, he said.

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