

**ANNUAL DENVER TREE PLANTING HELD
BY IRLENE OWADA
ROCKY MOUNTAIN BUREAU CHIEF**

Beautiful cherry tree blossoms bathed the city of Denver in splendor on April 21 as SGIUSA members planted cherry trees for the 13th consecutive year. The ceremony was held in the Pavilion of City Park overlooking a lake. This scenic view was photographed by SGI President Ikeda during his visit to Denver in 1996 and displayed in his "Dialogue with Nature" exhibition, which was shown in May 2000 at Denver City Hall. Members and forestry personnel joined with Denver Mayor Wellington Webb, his wife, Wilma, and Mrs. Sadako Tsubokawa in planting 28 cherry trees in the park. A total of 123 trees were planted by members around the city until 7:00 p.m. on April 21.

SGI-USA members have been planting cherry trees for the last 12 years, but only recently found out that Mrs. Tsubokawa's father, Dr. Konai Miyamoto, gave a gift of 25 cherry trees to the City of Denver in 1937. He made this gift in her honor as she visited that year from Japan. Unfortunately, the trees did not survive. Other pioneer citizens such as George Cramer, a former city park planner also planted cherry trees. SGI-USA members wanted to acknowledge their pioneering efforts by planting the trees this year. Although these early trees did not survive, more than 600 cherry trees are now thriving around the city.

Dr. Miyamoto contributed to his community as well. His deep concern for his countrymen and other immigrants prompted him to courageously speak with then Colorado Governor Ralph Carr about the plight of people of Japanese ancestry, who were placed in internment camps during World War II. Governor Carr spoke out against such tyranny, declaring it "inhumane." He asked others to join with him in his stand, but they declined. He later lost his bid for the U.S. Senate, many believed, because of his human rights stand.

"We are proud of the beautiful cherry trees now blooming along Cherry Creek," said Brian Matsuo, SGI-USA vice general director. "SGI President Ikeda has expressed great hope for the cherry trees, calling them a great contribution to our society." Mr. Matsuo voiced his hope that the youth would carry on these efforts with the spirit of togetherness and that Denver will one day be famous for its cherry trees.

"I think that the citizens of Denver are very lucky to have you helping the forestry plant these trees for such a long time," commented City Forester Judy O'Connor. "When I drive around Denver and see the cherry trees blooming, I know it must be spring." Mrs. Webb, who is the director of the Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film, said, "The mayor and I are happy to see such items of beauty, like the cherry trees, that help people love one another and love the beauty of this earth."

Mayor Webb spoke about leaving behind a legacy: "This is a great tradition that we want to continue here, a way for each person to leave behind their own individual legacy. To have this from as far back as 1937 is wonderful. I applaud you!"