

THE TEXTILE MUSEUM

by Gary B. Sharpe

Refined and sophisticated women in every corner of western society have ample evidence that men in general share a natural disdain for anything frou-frou, arty, aesthetic, or cultural. These women believe that most men's interests are more attuned to guns, things of a mechanical nature, and Monday night football. Nevertheless, while all this may be true, little did I realize that I was about to experience an epiphany while my wife, Donna Dye, and I were recently spending a week at National Harbor as the guests of ASG member Jacquie and her husband, Evan Hume.

During our week, after making the rounds and taking in excellent restaurants and many, many historic monuments, memorials, and museums, Donna and Jacquie tried to convince Evan and me that we should visit The Textile Museum. Our natural reluctance immediately kicked into overdrive, but the fact that I am writing this article should give you an idea of how that discussion turned out.

Nestled on a quiet street just off "Embassy Row" in the Kalorama neighborhood of Washington, D.C., The Textile Museum is housed in the former home of the Museum's founding family. It was designed in 1913 by noted classical revival architect John Russell Pope. The grand foyer, with marble floors, leads to a recessed portico and landscaped garden beyond.

The galleries are located in the adja-

cent building, designed in 1908 by Waddy B. Wood. Two to three times per year, the Museum hosts world-renowned exhibitions which have an international focus.



During our tour, we were indeed fortunate to have Ms. Margaret Yamamoto as our docent for the "Woven Treasures of Japan's Tawaraya Workshop" exhibition. It featured some of the sumptuous pieces created in one of Nishijin's oldest and most illustrious workshops: Tawaraya. Ms. Yamamoto was absolutely superb in her presentations, explaining in great detail all elements of Japan's remarkably refined textile tradition.

For centuries, the Japanese have admired the silks produced in the Nishijin neighborhood of Kyoto as the epitome of beauty and opulence. With a history stretching back more than 500 years, the Tawaraya workshop is renowned for supplying the Japanese Imperial Household with yusoku orimono—fine silks in patterns, weaves, and color combinations traditionally reserved for the garments and furnishings of the aristocracy, including the Emperor.

I do not recall looking at my watch; I suppose the tour lasted about two hours, but it seemed shorter. As we were leaving the museum, I whispered to Ms. Yamamoto, "As much as I hate to admit it, and don't let this get out, the exhibition was excellent and I really enjoyed my visit!"

Gary Sharpe was born in Jacksonville, Florida and traveled the world during a 30-year career with the U.S. Air Force. After his retirement as a chief master sergeant, he relocated to Tallahassee, Florida and retired, again, as an information systems manager with the State of Florida. Although he has served in all executive positions in the Tallahassee chapter of the Air Force Association, his greatest claim-to-fame is serving as the official photographer of the ASG Tallahassee Chapter. His other interests include genealogy and handyman tasks around the home. One task he performs quite often is loading ASG wife Donna Dye's sewing machine and supplies into her car.

Editor's Note: You can enjoy the treasures of The Textile Museum in person or online. Visit www.textilemuseum.org for schedules of upcoming exhibits, more information on "Woven Treasures of Japan's Tawaraya Workshop" (including the Gallery Guide), as well as other previous exhibits and several special online exhibits.

