

Sleepless in Sanda

By DAVID LYGRE
Special to the Record

Jody Scheffelmaier and I were fortunate to be this year's Kittitas County representatives invited to participate in the Sanda (Japan) International Masters Marathon, a 13.1 mile run.

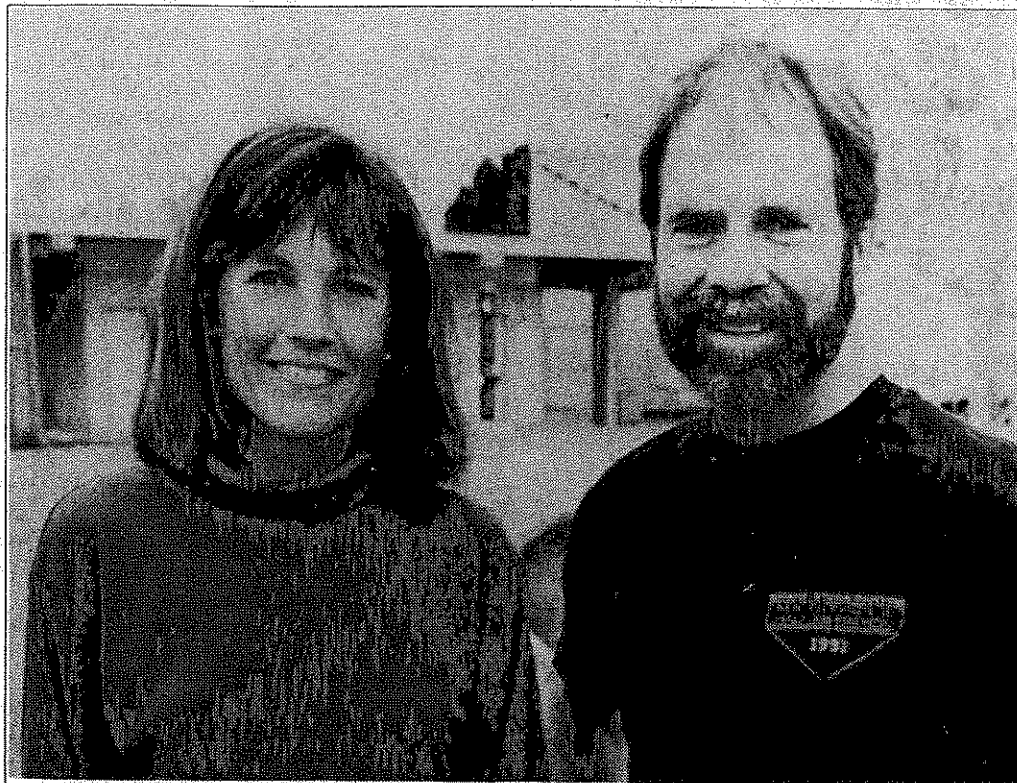
Our flight arrived at the new, futuristic airport in Osaka, where we were met by a delegation that drove us to Sanda. After about 15 hours of travel, crossing the date line, adjusting our watches seven hours, and driving on the left side of the road, we were dropped off at the homes of our host families somewhat in a daze.

Jody's host family consisted of a husband, wife (who ran in the event), and their young child. I stayed with an American (who teaches English) and his Japanese wife. Later I stayed with a woman physician (who has visited Ellensburg) and her son and daughter.

Since we arrived late in the evening, my host family kindly showed me to my tatami room. The room was walled by sliding wooden panels, covered with mats, and had a futon in the center to sleep on and a portable heater (central heating is uncommon). I gratefully went to sleep. About two hours later I awoke.

I crawled out of my futon in pitch darkness and immediately started getting cold since I had turned off the heater. I stumbled over toward the sliding panel that was the entrance to my room and was a bit disoriented. I slid the panel and discovered solid wall behind it. It seemed an eternity while I slid panel after panel in the total darkness and felt bare wall behind each one. I thought I was going to perish from the cold and an exploding bladder, forever trapped in a room with no exit. Finally I found the magic panel.

The days before the run were filled with official functions and sight-seeing. Jody and I were treated royally by our host families and by the event organizers.



Jody Scheffelmaier and David Lygre represented Kittitas County in the Sanda International Masters Marathon.

The day of the run included extensive pre-race festivities. Each of the six guest runners (two each from Australia and New Zealand) greeted the 4,500 runners; Jody and I bravely did this in carefully-practiced Japanese.

We were escorted to the front of the runners, so Jody and I led the race for awhile. Then the gun went off. My dreams of winning were shattered in the first 10 seconds as runners blasted past. I stayed on my expected pace for about half the distance before experiencing a power outage. Then I gave additional local runners the pleasure of beating an international guest runner. In contrast, Jody ran a strong, excellent race.

After finishing, I was greeted by two Japanese students who had stayed at our home last summer. They came by train, traveling about 400 miles in six hours. After spending two hours with them, I walked them back to the train station, where they faced a seven-hour

return trip.

That evening, my second host family took me to a local restaurant where we celebrated the events by eating a fine meal followed by raw shrimp, scallops, tuna, and squid, all dipped in hot mustard and a sauce. The food tasted good, though after one of the raw scallops slithered down my throat I received an urgent request from my stomach not to do that again for awhile.

The next two days featured more fun — visiting temples, an amazing castle, and pottery shops. Then we flew back, again experiencing a time warp, but warmed by wonderful memories of the kind, gracious people we met in our sister city.

Dr. David Lygre is a chemistry professor at Central Washington University. Jody Scheffelmaier is a science technician at CWU. Both are long distance runners. Sanda is Ellensburg's sister city.