

<https://jla-lifesaving.or.jp/lifesavingwithme/2966/>

My lifesaving activities

I'm not a runner. I'm not a swimmer. Why would that kind of person continue engaging in lifesaving activities?

Well, to answer that question, it would be best to ask the main players, the "lifesavers" themselves, to talk about the attractiveness of lifesaving activities. For this purpose, I set up an online roundtable discussion. In particular, this time I invited those who have been to Maroochydore to participate in the training camp conducted by Australian coaches. Their passion for lifesaving honed through challenges in an unknown world should be shared. Their story is also my main motive and energy source for the activities.

Background:

In 1993, I visited a family who lived on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia. They introduced me to Judi Pratt, who was learning Japanese. Her husband is Mal Pratt, current Governor of Maroochydore Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) who is deeply committed to the Surf Club. Back then, he offered, "If Japanese lifesaving needs some help, I am more than happy to help you out." What a blessing! I thought. It was a tremendous offer and I felt in my gut that I need to get something happening.

This good news was disseminated to all the lifesaving clubs in Japan through the newly established Japanese Lifesaving Association. However, back in those days it was a period of transition in Japanese lifesaving. Every lifesaving club across the country was busy focussing on establishing their own clubs because the system went through some structural changes. The operation of clubs used to be dependent on the Association, but the Australia-Japan Foundation financial support in 1983-1988 made a massive impact on lifesaving activities in Japan. With the new operational system, the Association decided to give the clubs more independence on their beaches. For this reason, the clubs could not make another commitment towards such an offer from Australia even if they wanted to. There was not a single response from a club. Finally, in 1996 the Shimoda Life Saving Club (Shimoda LSC) raised their hand. I joined the Shimoda Life Saving Club and launched the project with the club members to create the sister club relationship between the Maroochydore SLSC and the Shimoda LSC.

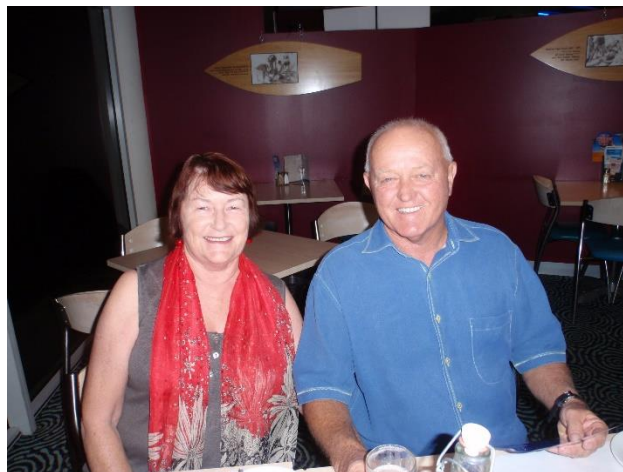


Photo: The founders of the sister club relationship, Judith Eileen Pratt & Mal Pratt

On 8 August 1999, in the evening after the patrol, the official signing ceremony for the Sister Clubs was held at the Shimoda Civic Centre. The President of the Maroochydore SLSC and 10 other members from the club, more than 80 members from the Shimoda LSC and other distinguished guests including the late President Kunichika Kaneko of the Japanese Lifesaving Association were in attendance. The Counsellor from the Australian Embassy, Paul Molloy and the Mayor of Shimoda City, Kiyoshi Iketani were distinguished witnesses. The President of Maroochydore SLSC, Stan Wilcox and the President of Shimoda LSC, Akihide Tokuyama officially signed the Sister Club partnership agreement between the two clubs.



Photo: From left Paul Molloy, Counsellor from the Australian Embassy; Riko Watanabe, Shimoda LSC legend; Stan Wilcox, President of Maroochydore Surf Life Saving Club; Akihide Tokuyama, President Shimoda Life Saving Club; Kiyoshi Iketani, Mayor of Shimoda City

Since then, lifesavers from Maroochydore have visited Shimoda every August. They stay for 7 to 10 days, visiting our 8 patrol beaches, patrolling, training, and sharing dorms together. They also enjoy the training with Shimoda junior lifesavers. The summer in Japan is much shorter than in Australia and usually 8 to 10 weeks in July and August. Unlike in Australia, active lifesavers are mostly university students, who started to become lifesavers after entering university, and who can patrol every day during the summer holidays as a casual job. As for Shimoda Life Saving Club, the City of Shimoda is an employer.

Then in December every year, lifesavers of Shimoda fly to Maroochydore and stay for about 2 weeks. We call the visit, Shimoda Squad Training Camp +.

Both clubs have volunteer committee members and the budget and expenses for the exchange program are almost equal for the two clubs.

Committee members for Maroochydore: Mal Pratt (Chairperson), Mike Dwyer, Peter Dun for the Shimoda Visit, Alan Vidler for the Maroochydore Camp, and Fran Boulton as leader of the Tucker Team.

Committee members for Shimoda: Shusaku (Shu) Miyabe (Chairperson), Sana Tsukamoto (Board of Director for International Liaison), and Directors for Liaison, T.S. (Pokemon), Daisuke Hashimoto, Yusaku Tamura, and lifesavers who handle international liaison for each beach.

Myself? My role now is helping behind the scenes, wishing our dreams to come true. Chiko, who was the first Director for Liaison, and I were talking a long time ago when we were worn out by busy paperwork for this program. "Someday we will not have to worry about the mountains of paperwork, and we can enjoy ourselves in this program. Wouldn't it be awesome to visit and sit together with glasses of champagne in our hands, watching the lifesavers from both clubs mingling happily on the beach at Maroochydore?"

Now, let's welcome the main players for this story!

The venue and date were Maroochydore SLSC, December 2019. This was the last Shimoda Squad Training Camp in Maroochydore before COVID-19.

"We had a ball at the Training Camp + in 2019"

An online roundtable talk, 20 January 2022

Main storytellers (in the alphabetical order): Kody Aizawa, Akimasa Hamada, Hanako Hori, Haruna Inagaki, Minami Nomoto, Yuya Omata, Riku Saito, Akane Sasaki, Natsuki Watabe, and Yudai Yoshida

Advisor: Shu Miyabe, Honorary Vice President of Shimoda LSC (a Chaperon and an interpreter in Maroochydore)

Producer: Sana Tsukamoto (Director of the Board and participated in the Training Camp 2012)

Moderator: Yusaku Tamura (Director of Liaison)

The number of Shimoda Squad members in 2019 was 10 and they happened to be all 2nd year university students who would be the main active patrol members next season.

Regrettably "that next season" gave them the most difficult, unfamiliar, and unexpected patrols of all time due to COVID-19.

Yusaku Tamura, Moderator: As the first question, I would like to ask you all: how did you feel before leaving Japan for Maroochydore?

Yuya Omata:

I wanted to observe the Maroochydore training system, as the training coordinator for my beach.

I wasn't worried about visiting, but rather determined to take on whatever challenges would come in the training in Maroochydore.



Yuya Omata

Yudai Yoshida:



I had the vague notion of wanting to develop my ability in surf sports. At Yumigahama we do not have big surf, and I've heard that Maroochydore have big surf, so I wanted to be able to develop my techniques for bigger surf.

Yudai Yoshida

Riku Saito:

I had two worries. One was English, and the other was food. As to training, I did not expect me to develop my ability, but rather I would like to look for some clues or tips for training after I came back to Japan.



Riku Saito

Natsuki Watabe:

Why I wanted to visit Maroochydore was that when I had spent the second summer in Shimoda in August, the surf was big, and I was really scared. I was worried if I would be able to survive in the training camp in Maroochydore. But my second thought was that it was not good to avoid this if I wanted to be an active lifesaver next season.



Natsuki Watabe

Akimasa Hamada: (no photo)

My worry was if I could understand English. But the feeling of wanting to visit beaches overseas was bigger than my worry. Also, I wanted to observe the way how the Australian patrol is done.

Minami Nomoto:

I was worried, because I heard in Australia the surf was huge.



Minami Nomoto

Haruna Inagaki:

I've been to the US a few times, but not for lifesaving camps, so I was a bit worried to jump into an unknown world.



Haruna Inagaki

Hanako Hori:



I knew the members who were going with me, and they were better performers than I, so I was a bit hesitant to join them. At a couple of orientation meetings, we talked to each other and exchanged our thoughts and expectations which led me to start looking forward to the Camp. I wanted to learn whatever I could in the lifesaving community in Australia.

Hanako Hori

Kody Aizawa:

The quantity and intensity of training, and points to think at each training were the main pieces of knowledge I wanted to learn in Maroochydore. There were three orientation meetings before we left, and they were comprehensive lectures about Australia and Maroochydore SLSC. Also, we learned all the minute details, so I had no worries even if it was my first trip to Australia.



Kody Aizawa

Akane Sasaki: (no photo)

I heard that surf would be huge, so I wanted to get used to big surf. Also, I was a bit worried whether I would be able to understand the English during the training sessions. I felt very relieved that I had learned the table manners and other details at the orientation meetings beforehand.



Photo: Courtesy visit to the Surf Life Saving Queensland

Maroochydore Committee members Mike Dwyer, left, and Alan Vidler, right (Both came to Shimoda in 2000.)

Moderator: I see. Now, you arrived, stepped on to the Maroochydore Beach, and your training started. In the morning from 5:30 to 6:45 and in the afternoon 4:00 to 5:15. There was board training by Coach Terry O'Connor or for surf ski, Coach Alan Vidler every day and also, Beach Training by Coach Todd McSwan (Swanny). Please tell us about the training with these coaches.



Photo caption: The first board training with Coach Terry O'Connor (who came to Shimoda in 2012)

Some members, "Are we going through the break?"

"Yes, it's a kind of test for you all how much you can paddle," Shu Miyabe interpreted the coach's direction.

Hanako:

At Terry's board training we were divided into two groups, male and female, and he was watching us very carefully. He was watching individual performance and when we came out from the water, he gave valuable advice to each member. If we learned and made changes, he praised us. It was right after the performance, so it was easy to remember, my motivation rose, and the training became very enjoyable.

Alan's ski was very enjoyable, because that was my first time to paddle the ski, and though it was at first a bit difficult, he was instructing me very carefully and patiently, so at the end I was able to manage paddling the ski well.

Swanny's beach training made me become interested in the beach performance. I'd never had beach training before, but there were lots of pumped-up elements in the training.

Natsuki:

All trainings were so different from those in Shimoda.

I thought Terry's "Run Board Run" was just for one set, but it was actually three sets without rest, and the quantity surprised me. In the training back home, usually we consecutively

perform the board training from the start to the end, for instance, starting ins and outs. However, one day Terry asked us to learn how to out into the water a hundred percent without a board. Without a board? It was something new to us.

In Swanny's beach training, he himself was enjoying the training, so he made us liven up.

Alan's ski, it was my first experience, but paddling ski was so much fun.

Akimasa:

We do not have coaches and the only people in charge of training back in Shimoda LSC are 2nd year students.

When I observed trainings in Australia, I learned a lot, for instance, how much we should rest and how you explain ins and outs to the learners. Each training was so concentrated that it felt awfully hard.

Yuya:

Terry's board training was different from that of Japan. I observed that he did not particularly focus on how to paddle but instructed us more to take advantage of the environment, surroundings, and condition of the water on the day.

Alan's ski session was awesome. He's amazing. In the beginning I was not able to paddle the ski at all in the training, but he taught me very carefully the fundamentals such as how you start and which direction you should focus hard. Alan even made me, an inexperienced person, manage the jump start. I felt so proud.

At Swanny's beach training, he taught me how to raise the foot up and the movement of the body, which are particularly important because the accelerating is difficult on the sand.



Photo: Ski Coach, Alan Vidler. He patiently teaches us until everyone can complete a jump start.



Photo: Muscles Training Coach Brad Kildey (who came to Shimoda in 2018)



Photo: Beach Coach Todd McSwan (Swanny) and his daughter Tahlia

Yudai:

The thing the three coaches had in common was that they taught us that enjoying both training and competitions is the most important thing.

They also taught us that at each training, you should always think why we are doing this particular training. After that I tried to think, why I am doing this. When I got home, I was able to teach this to my peers confidently and felt they understood.

Minami:

At every training the coach instilled in our mind the fact that you should use your brain 100%.

The content of the training program was designed to let everyone enjoy it.

Kody:

The training was harder than I had expected. My body was aching, but all the training was new to me and inspired me. I could thoroughly enjoy the camp for two weeks.

At Terry's board training, he taught us the fundamentals. How to observe the tide, how to overcome the condition at the ins and outs when the surf was dropping in specific ways, etc.

At Alan's, I learned how to start skiing on the river. This unexpected and exciting experience helped me dominate at the start, which I am now good at in races.

Swanny taught us technique of beach sprinting and the fundamentals of how to utilise your body. We were performing training as a game, but the training itself was very effective.

Akane:

I felt the differences with the training in Shimoda. In Japan, in general, the older students teach the younger students, so the instructors aren't as qualified as in Australia. Therefore, they wouldn't do any exercises that might be dangerous, or change the training menu altogether, whereas in Australia, it also depends on the judgement of the instructors, but they let the members perform the exercise first and the members learn while doing.

Riku:

The most impressive lesson was motivation. Throughout training sessions our motivation was high. They gave us positive feedback and gave us advice. From these we felt highly motivated, and the training was very enjoyable. When I got home, I would like to give compliments whenever my peer lifesavers deserve it.

◆The official program at Maroochydore every year is very well planned. After breakfast and lunch, there are Surf Training, Body Surfing Training, Beach Training, Muscle Training at the gym and on the beach, climbing hills as a Cross Training. Between these training sessions, there are also courtesy visits to the Surf Life Saving Queensland and a study tour of the "Surfcom" which is an online operated lifesaving network system at the Surf Life Saving

Sunshine Coast. Australia Zoo and a big shopping centre visits are outings to learn about Australia and the Australian way of life. There is always something going on, keeping the Shimoda Squad busy. Every time they got back to the Surf Club, they'd collapse onto their beds to grab a few minutes of rest.

Moderator:

The next question I'm gonna ask you is about the patrol in Maroochydore. All weekend, lifesavers are on duty. Early in the morning they drive ATV pulling a trailer containing all the gear for patrol from the Surf Club storage to the beach, then putting the awning up, and checking each equipment is ready. Although you could not join them in patrolling this time, I suppose they explained to you everything.

Riku:

I was told that in Australia, making sure drowning doesn't happen in the first place is the priority in patrolling, but lifesavers in Maroochydore said it's more like when something happens, they react. I understood that when it comes to the very basics, the perceptions of the beach goers were very different. Australians are conscious of the dangers of the water. They were swimming between the flags.



Photo: The SLSQ Helicopter is patrolling with a lifesaver on it.

Haruna:

I observed with amazement how lifesavers are equipped with a wide range of measures to treat patients, for instance, an oxygen cylinder was lying near the watch tower, which surprised me very much. (We cannot access such things as a lifesaver under the medical service act in Japan.)

During the weekdays, the professional lifeguards watched the monitors of the 'Surfcom,' from the watch tower at the centre of the beach.

Akane:

I was very impressed at how Australia lifesavers can implement a wide range of medical actions, and the manners of beachgoers were excellent.

Yuya:

The equipment was most advanced.

The placement of the two flags changes depending on currents and rips in Maroochydore. After the Camp, back in Shimoda, when we were the main active lifesavers on the beach, the captains of each tower on our beach discussed with each other and changed the flags for the safer areas accordingly.

Minami:

The watch tower in the centre of the beach was very reasonable and effective.

In Japan, active patrol members are mainly students, whereas in Maroochydore, the age range is large. It would be good to have a diverse range of members on duty, because they can learn from each other.

As to IRB, the way of driving and the level of the IRB experience were super.

Kody:

Patrol members were diverse, and their ages varied. Each lifesaver had different and clearly defined responsibilities. I observed that it contributed to good teamwork.

Also, the beachgoers themselves do their own risk management, and they listen to lifesavers attentively.



Photo: After visiting the lifesavers' tent. Ruben Zikarsky, far right at the back, explained all the patrol gear to us. Far right is Alan Vidler, Ski Coach.

On the tower, from left Steve Wieland then President of the Club, and next to him Bill Chilcott, who has been patrolling for 45 years with Steve.

At the back, Maroochydore Surf Club building.

Hanako:

I was very surprised by the different patrol system and the wealth of equipment. In Australia as everyone understands the risks of the water, you can do your patrol without hiccups and trouble free, which I admired very much.

◆ Now, we want to talk about hospitality. Maroochydore, under the wing of Fran Boulton as a leader, has a Tucker Team for our meals. As to Breakfast and Lunch, you can have all you can eat. In the evening, we are invited to members' places. The below is a few examples of 2019 hospitality.

Jim & Julie McMullen invited us, as they did every year, to their family "Roast Dinner"; Wade & Judie Lee cooked for us Curry&Rice and chicken Kara-age, both students' favourite: and Alan & Ingrid Vidler prepared for us Taco Rice, familiar dinner dish after the patrol at Shimoda LSC. Needless to say, regardless of hosts, dessert after the dinner is greeted with shouts of welcome!



Photo: Jim & Julie McMullen (red top)'s place with a Christmas tree, next to Julie is Fran Boulton, a leader of the Tucker Team. Alan Vidler in the centre of the back row.



Photo: Wade & Jodie Lee's place. Wade came to Shimoda in 2009 and their daughter, Cassie who came to Shimoda in 2018, in the front row. At the back third from the right is Katrina Tam (who came to Shimoda in 2018).

Photo: Peter & Anne Dun. Peter is a Maroochydore SLSC committee member who is in charge of organising a team to be sent to Shimoda LSC.



Photo: Alan & Ingrid Vidler's place. Alan came to Shimoda in 2000 and since then, he asks every year the new fashionable words on everybody's lips among the young people in Japan and writes them down all in his notebook, using those words in Japanese with good pronunciation to make the Shimoda members laugh and feel relaxed.



Photo: On the last day every year, Shimoda members host the Shimoda Dinner at the Surf Club to thank those who helped us during our stay and give them mementoes as a token of our appreciation.

Cetres in black polo shirt are Damon Nixon (who came to Shimoda in 2018), Olli Hoelscher (in 2017), Katrina Tam and Ruben Zikarsky in white shirt.

Moderator: After the Camp, do you think or feel you changed or advanced your lifesaving, and/or aspects of your life?

Natsuki:

I cannot say I feel safe with big surf 100%, but I feel more confident in dealing with them now.

I was not enjoying the training very much in Japan, but in Maroochydore, I really enjoyed every session of training. As Maroochydore Camp was so much fun, my friends and I were thinking of going back to Maroochydore again in March. (Ako: Since Natsuki was in the golf club at high school, she was hesitant about big surf. She enjoyed herself so much in Maroochydore and the three girls wanted to visit again before they graduate from university, but due to COVID-19, they had to give up on their plans. The good news is that you can visit any time after graduation, so let's have our fingers crossed.)

Hanako:

After returning to Shimoda, my peers congratulated me that my skills of surf and ins and outs of board paddling became incredibly improved. That was the turning point for me. Now I feel very confident in training.

The Camp was my first experience overseas as an adult, and I feel I would like to go as many places abroad as I can and get to know more about the world. (Ako: Hanako was very faithful to what coaches told her to do and got into the water as they told her without hesitation, so it was good to hear that she has had a confidence boost.)

Akimasa:

Training in Maroochydore with the coaches was particularly good. I learned that training needs coaches and/or leaders who look out even for the experienced members in Japan.

I had been told that Aussies were incredibly good at paddling, so that is what I anticipated to learn. When Beau Farrell was paddling, who is very famous in our club that he is good at paddling since U14 and one of the legends in the Maroochydore Club, I watched him paddling very carefully. I imitated the motion of what he was doing and tried it. I found I was doing better. Simply, I was able to learn without asking him but through simulating, which pleased me. It was one of the most impressive experiences I've had. (Ako: Akimasa is always training in the water. He was a leader of this group and made sure that my husband and I also didn't feel excluded from the young group.)

Haruna:

I reconfirmed what I had learned at this Camp after we came back through instructing our peers who could not go to Maroochydore. I rediscovered my feelings towards lifesaving I had at the start, thinking about how I could have people like lifesaving, and I found myself loving lifesaving even more. (Ako: Haruna was interpreting from English to Japanese for a couple of times. I hope she would be more active once she starts working after university using her talents.)

Yudai:

After I came home, I shared what I'd learnt through finding meaning in each training session. Also, I enjoyed instructing the Shimoda members in the whole-club training camp.

At this 2-week Camp, I learned the difference in cultures between Japan and overseas. New experiences and taking an interest in worlds previously unknown were condensed into the 2 weeks and inspired me, teaching me of the importance of taking on new challenges, so now I would like to take on whatever challenges may come. (Ako: He now belongs to Minami Izu Life Saving Club, which was newly established separating from Shimoda LSC from next season. He became the last member from Yumigahama beach to visit Maroochydore. I'm sure Yuudai will pass on what he learned in Maroochydore together with those who have been to Maroochydore in the past.)

Yuya:

The content of training was amazing. The person in charge of training at Shirahama Beach used to be the 2nd year students, but I thought it would be difficult to pass on the knowledge gained at Maroochydore with that arrangement, so I changed the system from 2nd year student to 3rd year student who have been to Maroochydore.

I had an opportunity paddling with the youth members of Maroochydore. I expected that I could have a good battle with those in the same age group, but I lost. Worse was that I even lost to the younger ones. This was not supposed to be happening! The difference in level was enough to dampen my spirits.

COVID-19 made the Shimoda Camp, which I was looking forward to, regrettably cancelled. So, I regularly went to the beach as much as I could, as I believe it is more effective if I want to learn more about the surf, paddling in the water. (Ako: Yuuya devoted himself as a leader of the students in Shimoda Club and conducted the training sessions to all Shimoda members every Saturday from January through March, wintertime in 2021. It was a significant contribution to Shimoda Club for the next season. He made it no matter what the weather brought, raining, or snowing to the icy water.)

Riku:

I wanted to go to Maroochydore since I was a first-year student. After a long wait of 2 years, I could make it. It was a really fulfilling experience and one of the big milestones of my lifesaving life.

I had wanted to ask a couple of questions in Maroochydore and Alan taught me in a respectful manner. A young lifesaver, Ruben, kindly gave me answers to my questions, too. Thank you, guys, for helping me.

When I came home, I could deliver what I had learned from Maroochydore to our peer lifesavers in persuasive ways thanks to Maroochydore coaches, and Alan and Ruben. Due to COVID-19, training has become difficult to carry out in Shimoda. The knowledge of the training methods from Maroochydore became a good source of guidance though. I have been using these skills and knowledge in the training, and at the 47th Japan National Lifesaving Championships held on 9 and 10 October 2021 without spectators, I got the bronze medal with Kody in the Rescue Board. It was the culmination of the work from Maroochydore.

I want to share these methods again with the Shimoda members at the Shimoda Camp before I graduate from university. (Ako: He will be a good instructor to Shimoda Club in the future.)



Photo: The last day of board training in the morning. Everyone looks so content and are all smiles.

The centre left at the back is Beau Farrell (who came to Shimoda 2009), Terry O'Connor, Board Coach, and Will Thompson second from right.

The front row far left is Cassie Lee.

Now, this is the time for me to tempt all the Shimoda members to throw the coaches into the water as a traditional ceremony.

Kody:

Seeing is believing. I saw and was convinced that lifesaving is a part of Australian life. This environment attracted me very much and my dream is getting bigger and bigger - I want to get to know more about lifesaving in Australia. The Maroochydore visit was just the start of my lifesaving. (Ako: Kody is one of the JLA's High Performance Team members. He was a junior member in Shimoda, as he grew up in Shimoda and knew lifesavers since he was little. He will continue to be passionate about lifesaving in the future as well.)

Minami:

I can now think while training. This was a big step for me.

Checking while knowing what to be careful about while training has become my habit and I feel good to be able to share the knowledge I learned from Maroochydore with our peer lifesavers confidently.

The Maroochydore visit broadened my horizons not only in lifesaving, but also my life. As to lifesaving, I have now considered that lifesaving is not only an activity while you are a student, but also activities you could continue in your life no matter how old you are. (Ako: Minami was a sub chief supporting members for the Shirahama beach area as a main active lifesaver in the 2020 season. She had to deal with many unexpected issues due to COVID-19 behind the scenes and talked to the Shimoda Club office, which was a new experience for her. Sana Tsukamoto, Director of the Board told her, "There are many works to do as a lifesaver not only in patrol on the beach, but also behind the scenes, so please join us after you graduate.")

Akane:

I was very happy whenever I caught Australian people's eye, they smiled. How nice of them!

I had a valuable experience. I am very grateful towards the sister club relationship, which has been built up year by year by many members of the two clubs, we were spoiled in earnest. (Ako: She was a Shimoda junior member and now a Minami Izu member. She is always reserved but can see through things and has an inner fortitude. Looking forward to her successes in the welfare area as well as lifesaving activities.)

Moderator: Thank you very much, everyone. I have not been to Maroochydore, yet, but listening to you all, I want to go there. As every past member kept enjoying and persevering with their lifesaving activities, a program to welcome Maroochydore members in our summer, August, and another program to visit Maroochydore in December have been continuing for such a long time. I felt very strongly that this tradition should be continued.

Afterword:

As Akane Sasaki said, it is true that the members from both Maroochydore and Shimoda Clubs have been accumulating invaluable experiences year after year. The mutual trust has been promoted over the past 22 years.

The members of the two clubs who share the same goals have been connecting with each other across the vast Pacific Ocean via SNS like Instagram, even through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Needless to say, it would not have been so successful without the big support behind the scenes for such official sister club relationships.

(1) Firstly, Shimoda Club has been supported by SHIPS Ltd., clothing company for the past 26-years as a sponsor. https://www.shipltd.co.jp/pages/en_company.aspx They provide our equipment and other items for patrols and when Maroochydore lifesavers visit Shimoda, the patrol uniforms are ready for them to wear on the beach.

(2) Secondly, both Presidents Rob Elford of Maroochydore SLSC and Satoshi Yamaguchi of Shimoda LSC and their executive members understand fully and support our sister club exchange programs.



Photo: Rob, Current President of Maroochydore SLSC, & Deb Elford, and the Shimoda lifesavers training camp +2019

(3) Last but not least, the biggest supporters are club members from both clubs. Without their huge support and interest in getting to know each other, the program would not have lasted this long and expanded.

My husband and I always welcome lifesavers from Maroochydore in August every year, and in December of every year we chaperon the Shimoda members to Maroochydore. To be honest with you, this relationship started from somewhere in the negative, not from zero. We have had our share of ups and downs. Lifesaving is a voluntary activity. There are few relationships like our sister clubs between the two countries in the world. Both clubs have shared the walk into a pathless forest. We have grown through trial-and-error. However, a "Mentor" for both club members, Stan Wilcox, former President, once said before he passed away, "Young ones should broaden their horizon, not only in the lifesaving world, but also widen and deepen their lives." The words rescued us every time we faced the difficulties and putting our heads together to solve issues. In addition to that, Shimoda LSC has a President of Alumni Association of Maroochydore, Koji Horiuchi as an advisor.



Photo: In 1998 the first exchange program started. At that time, we visited for the Bronze Medallion Camp. Koji Horiuchi in the centre received the certificate thanks to the instructor Rita Kelly and the assessor, Stan Wilcox, late President of the Maroochydore SLSC.

As you can see from this round-table-talk, Shimoda members before the departure had mixed feelings of anxiety and anticipation. After arriving at Maroochydore on the beach, I always pray, standing on the shore to watch them in the water behind their back, “Come on, you can get through the break!” until the training is over.

But only eight solid days, the game has changed. Everyone can get through the break, no matter how huge the surf is, they can do it easily. This has been going on for the past 22 years. Watching them, I feel so happy as if I did it myself, and I am so proud of them.

The days go by in Maroochydore, smiles are being shown more on their face and they occasionally mention that they think of those who could not come with them back home, getting more confident, they do not realise they also mature during the stay. Aren't I lucky to witness this moment so closely! Incredibly thrilling!

I wouldn't replace these moments with any other.

Like the Training Squad + in 2019, on the last day they jump into the water with a satisfied glint in their eyes, and when I hear they all want to come back again to Maroochydore...I feel blessed that I am able to volunteer in lifesaving activities which make me never want to stop helping in the background.

Ako Hisamatsu
Honorary Vice President of Shimoda Life Saving Club
Honorary Vice President of Maroochydore Surf Life Saving Club