

LITERARY BOND: In 1987, **Jan Turnquist** was working as a guide at Orchard House in her hometown of Concord when then-**Crown Prince Akihito** and **Crown Princess Michiko** of Japan visited the historic home of "Little Women" author Louisa May Alcott.

According to Turnquist, the 1868 novel is so beloved in Japan that the royal couple's visit was chronicled by a Japanese television station so the nation could view the place in which Alcott wrote and set the story.

Turnquist, who was appointed director of Orchard House in 1999, never dreamed she would again see the couple who have since become emperor and empress. However, she recently returned from a nearly monthlong trip to Japan highlighted by an invitation to a tea for Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

Turnquist traveled to Japan to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the opening of Orchard House as a museum, and the 15th anniversary of the sister-city relationship between Concord and Nanae, in the province of Hokkaido.

At local schools, she was thrilled to perform her one-woman act as Alcott using one of an estimated 300 surviving "friendship dolls" out of nearly 13,000 sent by the United States to Japan in 1927 as a gesture of peace.

During World War II, the Japanese government ordered the dolls to be destroyed. Turnquist said the one loaned from a Japanese museum for her performance was a blond, blue-eyed Louisa May Alcott doll, which had been hidden for decades in an elementary school near Nanae complete with her letter of introduction, passport, and extra set of clothes.

Turnquist said she was honored to speak with the empress at the tea, and in her own gesture of goodwill, she left behind three gifts: a wooden pen carved from an Orchard House tree, a photo album commemorating Michiko's visit, and a copy of "Little Women."

Turnquist thinks the book remains so popular in Japan because its story of loving family members who aspire for a greater good resonates with Japanese ideals. Similarly, she believes the lesson of the friendship dolls is also relevant today.

"The fact that these dolls have survived," Turnquist said, "attests to friendship being deeper than discord."

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