



JAPANESE are generous people. It's hard to keep up with them, although we try, sending delicacies to family and friends from the far-flung Japanese regions we visit. I've lost count of the marvelous gifts I've received from in-laws over the decades. Near the end of our 2009 autumn vacation, we accepted a dinner invitation at the Tokyo home of Yoko Iizuka, my sister-in-law, the widow of Bank of Gunma CEO Tsuneo Iizuka, Yoshi's elder brother. This in itself is a rare gift. Most typically, Japanese entertain guests at restaurants, not their homes. But Yoko wanted to serve her home-

Gifts

**By Jackson Sellers
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fried oysters, which I love, and she also wanted to give me a special gift of many pieces. In my photo above, Yoko assembles the pieces for presentation, as her youngest son Satoshi, her centenarian mother Yukie, and her sister-in-law Yoshi look on. For most Americans, the gift requires an explanation. It's a set of carved marble artist seals

which, dipped into a vermillion ink paste, produce ideographic images similar to the one I use as an email signature graphic. A friend of my late brother-in-law carved the seals to Yoko's specifications. The ideographs in my seal are pronounced "Jyakuson" and they translate as "Sparrow Village." My Japanese friends and in-laws fancy that I'm some kind of artist or poet. It amuses me, and gratifies me, that Japanese think so highly of writers, even down-to-earth newspaper writers like me.

